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*The Franklins; or, The story of a convict*

George Etell Sargent









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**THE FRANKLINS;**  
**OR,**  
**THE STORY OF A CONVICT.**







**YOUNG FRANKLIN'S LIFE AGAIN SAVED BY ADAMS.**

*Page 233.*

THE FRANKLINS:

THE STORY OF A CONVICTION

IN THREE PARTS.

BY

G. E. SARGENT

THE STORY OF A CONVICTION "THE CONVICTION" IS A  
"WITHOUT BINDING" EDITION.

LONDON

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# THE FRANKLINS;

OR,

## THE STORY OF A CONVICT.

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BY

G. E. SARGENT,

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF A CITY ARAB," "GEORGE BURLEY," "HURLOCK CHASE,"  
"WITHOUT INTENDING IT," ETC., ETC.

LONDON:

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## PREFACE.

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THE publication of the following narrative almost certainly brings to a close the literary efforts of the present writer in connection with the productions of the Religious Tract Society. These efforts commenced about forty years ago, and were directed at first, as they ever afterwards continued to be, mainly, though not by any means exclusively, to works of amusement, blended with evangelical teaching, especially intended for that numerous class of readers who are better pleased with history told in a lively and graphic story form, than when placed before them in dry detail.

The volumes which passed from the pen of this writer during those forty years, were more than fifty in number; of these above forty are still on the Society's Catalogue, about one-half of which first appeared in one or other of its periodicals. For instance, *The Story of a Pocket Bible*; *Richard Hunne, a Story of Old London*; and *Vivian and his Friends*, were first printed in the 'Sunday at Home,' while *The Story of a City Arab*; *Stories of Old England*; *George Burley's Experiences*; *Hurlock Chase*; and *Without Intending It*, with others, first saw the light in the pages of the 'Leisure Hour.'

"The Franklins" is, properly speaking, an Historical Tale, intending to illustrate and set forth the state of society at large, and of many phases and conditions among English people as manifested in the latter end of the last century, and the earlier years of the present. It describes those conditions in a way which bare history would not be expected to attempt. The sad

deficiencies as well as some better traits of character pervading the rural population of the country in those days, from its highest to its lowest grades; the evils connected with the game laws, and the severities inflicted on offenders against them, and, indeed, on all law-breakers; the scenes constantly witnessed at election times, when polling for country Members of Parliament could be dragged through a course of fourteen days of drunkenness, demoralisation and rioting; the terrible cruelties inflicted on convicts during their voyage to the penal settlements in Australia, with the equally terrible lot awaiting them there; the iniquity of supplying the British navy service by means of press-gangs; all these matters are as true in history as imagination can depict them. The writer, indeed, was never, in any of his stories of this same class, at greater pains to make sure of the accuracy of his pen and hand than when, just twenty years ago, he was engaged in preparing "The Franklins; or, the Story of a Convict."

And he would like to have it further understood that the principal personages in the narrative are but types of others who, in personal character, have appeared in later years. Especially this refers to the squire's excellent lady, who, with true piety in heart and life, and under many social disadvantages arising partly from her peculiar station, did what she could in the best interests of those around her.

It is not unregretfully that the writer of this narrative bids farewell to the numerous unknown friends who, during the past forty years, have been, as he understands, pleased and instructed by his pen. He still more regrets that the increased and increasing infirmities of age diminish his power of co-operation with the Society in whose service, for one-half of *its* lifetime, he has had the happiness of being employed.

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## **PART THE FIRST.**





# THE FRANKLINS;

OR,

## THE STORY OF A CONVICT.

---

### CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO A PLEASANT SPOT IN OLD ENGLAND.

AT a time when England was England—which, in the present instance, is to be taken to mean before the era of ocean steamers, river steamboats, and railroads, and when manufactures, free trade, political economy, religious toleration, to say nothing of religious equality, general education, ragged schools, and other new-fangled notions, had not quite entirely (as the lovers of “good old times” say) corrupted the whole nation and introduced the present deplorable state of society—I repeat when England *was* England, there was a certain gentleman, of a plentiful estate, dwelling in a certain county, which need not be particularly indicated.

As this gentleman has something to do with our story, however, (or our story with this gentleman,) we tender for him his card—this being a ceremony which he rarely performed for himself. It reads thus: “Miles Oakley, of ‘The Oaks,’ Oakley, Esquire.” The interpretation of this being, that the estate of

Oakley had in some bygone time given its ancient Saxon name to its possessors, one of whom—a valiant soldier of the earlier Tudors, on coming home from the wars with a vastly accumulated fortune—reared upon his land an edifice of wonderful stability and imposing grandeur, and happily abbreviated his patronymic designation as a suitable title for the castellated mansion thus erected. This title he possibly considered as being at the same time euphonical, alliterative, descriptive, and suggestive ; which cannot be said of all titles now-a-days.

And what a fine old place “The Oaks” was ! Let me borrow its description, partly, from a writer who surely must have sketched this old “Hearth and Homestead” years and years ago, as it then stood, from life and nature.

“What an old place ‘The Oaks’ was ! Great gable ends jutted out here and there, bound and laid in with oak ; and iron bars were screwed and riveted together at equal distances throughout the massive walls, as if in defiance to the crumbling hand of time, and the ravages of tempests, and the storms of ages. A dried fosse surrounded the building, on the banks of which many a garden flower grew, and tall elms now towered from the very bed—convincing proof that it must have been a long time ago since it had been applied for the purpose of defence.

“In the centre was a stone porch, and from a deep groove cut in the coping-stone, and the rusty sockets of a shot-bolt, it was clear that a portcullis had once been suspended above it as further means of protection. Thick, sturdy limbs of ivy clung in every direction about the walls, and stretched themselves far and wide, even to the root and about the tall and crooked chimneys.

“Then, surrounding the mossy and grey building, giant oaks reared and stretched their stalwart limbs ; and, if a few of the

trunks of capacious girth had been scooped by age, and now afforded hollow homes for a few cosy owls to pass their leisure hours in, yet they bore as fresh and as green leaves, and flapped and fanned them in the summer wind as cheerily, and defied the angry winter blast as bravely, as their more sound and solid companions. Clumps, too, of thick dark firs were dotted here and there about the broad and extensive park adjoining, and the ring-dove cooed at morn and eve among the branches, without disturbing the antlered stag crouched in his lair at the roots."

Such, in its venerable old age, was "The Oaks," while, from its commanding position, its grey walls and ivy-covered battlements were visible far and near.

Below, and shrinking out of sight, and at a respectful distance from the park-gates of the seignorial mansion, was the village of Oakley. The rude huts of which it first consisted had become gradually a street of detached cottages, of various dates and materials, and styles of architecture; but all manifesting, more or less, an appearance of comfort externally, whatever might have been actually possessed and enjoyed by their inhabitants.

Wherever there is an old manorial residence, a church is not far distant. There was a church within the park-gate at Oakley, nearly coeval with "The Oaks" itself. A half-obliterated, black-letter inscription over its great oaken door, informed the passer-by (supposing he could read it) that the pious work of building that house of prayer was begun and completed by Anthony Oakley, on behalf of "the glorie of God, and for the repose of the souls of his ancestors"—this Anthony Oakley being the son and heir of the valiant soldier before mentioned, who, possibly, intended to build God's house after he had built his own, but found it convenient to transmit the

honour and expenditure to his son. To compensate for any want of pious zeal, however, he bequeathed on his dying bed sundry fat and flourishing lands to a neighbouring monastery, and a sum of money towards the erection concerning which he had given his son a charge. These matters are all clearly set down in the archives of Oakley.

Of course the Oakleys of those days were Roman Catholics, and the church was a Romish church; but *tempora mutantur*; and, not to dive too deeply into the musty records of antiquity, and so raise about our eyes a cloud of venerable dust, which, like that in Jonathan Oldbuck's study, would be very peaceable, inoffensive dust, if left undisturbed, it is sufficient to say that, at the Reformation, the church lands returned to the ownership of their former proprietors, and the church, purged of its idolatrous rites, gave a decent but not affluent living to a succession of sound Protestant pastors, under the title of Vicars of Oakley, the great tithes of the manor having followed the destination of the church's landed property.

The reader will be kind enough to consider this ecclesiastical digression as an introduction to the vicarage, a modest but not inconvenient dwelling, close by the park-gate; which—

“All that the master wished, and scarce a mile  
From village hamlet, to the morning sun  
Turns its warm aspect. On a hill,  
Half-way between its summit and a brook  
Which idly wanders at its foot, it stands,  
And looks into a valley, wood-besprent,  
That winds along below.”

Whether the vicarage ever remained “all that the master wished,” is a question which need not at present be mooted. We shall meet with this gentleman farther on in our history.

Apart from the vicarage, the village of Oakley boasted no

superior habitations. But on the surrounding lands, at widely scattered distances, were several farm-houses, with a labourer's cottage or two attached to each. With one exception, these farms, for miles around, belonged to the Oakley estate.

Having thus given a still-life sketch of the landscape before us, our next task is to introduce a few living and moving actors upon the scene.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### A FINE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.

**F**IRST in order comes the squire. At the time our story begins, Miles Oakley was nearly approaching his fiftieth year. Early left an orphan, the greater part of his life had been spent on his estate as its sole and undisputed owner. Through the first part of his manhood, an only and maiden sister had been enthroned as mistress of "The Oaks;" and it was not until her decease, which melancholy event transpired when Miles was more than forty years of age, that he awoke to the conviction that it is not good for man to be alone. After a decent interval of mourning, therefore, he looked around him, and mentally chose from among the fair forms which presented themselves to his memory, the daughter of an old school-mate, who lived on a much smaller property than his own, a few miles distant. The wooing was prosperous and short. A few months only passed away, and "The Oaks" had another mistress.

People wondered at the choice of Miles Oakley. His bride, who was thirty years old, had—as was averred—neither figure, fortune, nor pedigree. The whisper, by some means or other, reached the squire's ear; and he broke out into one of his good-humoured, vehement laughs.

"As to figure," said he—"which I understand to include personal beauty, face, complexion, and so forth—it is enough if my Lucy pleases me. Every man to his taste; and Lucy's figure is to my taste. As to fortune, I reckon the Oakleys never had occasion to marry for money; and I am thankful that I have not set such a bad example to those who may come after me. And as to pedigree, whatever that may be worth, there's enough and to spare of that in my old family tree; and it is the husband's blood that ennobles the wife, and not the wife's the husband."

In point of fact, Miles Oakley had sufficient reason to be satisfied with the prize he had drawn in the matrimonial lottery. Better than figure, fortune, or pedigree, the lady of "The Oaks" had an affectionate disposition, good temper, and excellent common sense, with a sufficiency of female accomplishments to satisfy a more fastidious husband than the squire was ever likely to prove. Better still, she was an earnest Christian, and was eminently gifted, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, with those graces which adorn, enrich, and sanctify the human soul in any and every station of life. There were some who wondered how Miles Oakley, setting other disqualifications aside, could have chosen such an one as his Lucy, seeing that he, though tolerably and indeed, in some respects, scrupulously moral, was not looked upon as a religious man. But, strange as it may seem, the squire really liked his wife's cheerful piety, and was all the better for it too, as were all others with whom Mrs. Oakley was brought into contact. We shall see something of this good influence as we proceed with our story. At present, however, we return to the squire himself, and give his portrait, which has been elsewhere drawn with pen and ink.

"Old friends, old books"—(not that he ever troubled the books much, though)—"old wine, old customs, and old wood

to burn," was the standing toast at "The Oaks;" and as the squire used to rise with his beaming, ruddy face, and clear, glistening eyes, to give his favourite zest to the bumper, seldom, if ever, was there seen a finer "Old English gentleman." His hair, thinly sprinkled upon his brow, was so white—he had begun to grow grey at twenty—that the slight shake of powder blended with it in no way heightened its bleached hue; and the scrupulous care with which the small pigtail was gathered into shape, and evenly bound with black riband, formed the very *beau-ideal* of one of those now obsolete appurtenances to a man of fashion. The cambric neckcloth, too, was folded and tied without a wrinkle; and if it bore a somewhat stiff appearance, and, of necessity, led the observer to think of the consistency of starch, still its very formality gave an air which a flabby, ill-conditioned cravat never yet had coupled with it. Then there was the long buff waistcoat, of almost interminable length, and the wide-skirted blue coat, with buttons of the very brightest polish, and the drab "shorts," which, when the gaiter was off, exhibited the very model of a calf and ankle encased in fine ribbed silk stockings. Such was the costume of the squire of "The Oaks," and such had been—if those rows of chubby-faced portraits in the corridor were authentic evidence—the outward semblance of many a former proprietor. It is true, by far the greater number of them were in more antique costumes. Flowing wigs, lace ruffles, velvet, long waists, short waists, there were in abundance; but the fresher paintings in the collection were so much like the present occupier, that they would have passed exceedingly well for pictures taken of him at various stages of his life.

Add to the above description of Miles Oakley's outer man, that he stood six feet two "in his stockings," was well proportioned, could walk ten miles, if need were, before breakfast, and



had a grip like a blacksmith's vice, and our readers may picture the squire as seen in the prime and ripeness of manhood.

Nature does not often enshrine an ignoble mind and essentially mean spirit in so noble a frame as that of Miles Oakley. She had not done so in this instance; for the squire was generous-hearted; and, as circumstances were favourable to the development of this constitutional virtue, he was open-handed also. The result of this was highly favourable to his reputation in the world, and especially among his numerous tenants and dependants, who basked in the sunshine of his favour. His servants were well fed and kindly treated, from Jem, the stable-helper, to Mr. Silverkey, the portly butler; the greater part of them were old stagers at "The Oaks," and they knew that, when too old to work, pensions and rent-free cottages awaited them.

Even the squire's horses and dogs shared in this genial consideration. Not that Miles Oakley spared either horse or dog in the chase, for the squire was a fox-hunter to the backbone; but their stables and kennels were palatial, their food was of the first quality, they were tenderly treated when sick; and when old age crept upon them, the horses had the run of the park, and the dogs had a separate kennel of their own, through the remainder of their days.

I have said that Miles Oakley did not much trouble his old books, though he had a library which an antiquary would have envied. The truth is, the squire was no student; and a strict regard for veracity compels me to admit that he had a kind of good-natured contempt for those who were bookish. Moreover, he had a stout aversion to the education of the poor. In this respect, however, he did not stand alone—his aversion being a very common one among the gentlemen of Old England of that date, who, as a body, sincerely believed that to teach "the lower orders" to read, and write, and cipher, would be the first step

to an entire revolution, which, indeed, was true, but not in the way they understood it.

Such being the notion of our squire, it may be gathered that education was not far advanced in the village of Oakley. There was a school, however, kept by an ancient dame of wonderfully sour aspect, to which the cottage mothers sent their refractory children of seven years and under, to get them out of the way; but the less said of the amount and quality of erudition there given and received, the better.

To return to Miles Oakley, 'whose popularity in no wise suffered from his dislike of learning, especially as he encouraged manly sports, and permitted a degree of familiarity towards himself from his villagers which they highly approved.

Christmas-time was a jovial time at "The Oaks." Then landlord and tenant, master and hind, met on common ground in the great hall of the old mansion. A large fire of enormous billets burned and blazed on the broad hearth-stone; long oaken tables were loaded with big rounds and sirloins of beef, mountains of puddings, and cans of nut-brown October; while the squire himself presided at the feast, and afterwards joined in the revels, which became more fast and furious as the small hours advanced, till the closing toast was given, by the master himself, of "Health and prosperity through another year to all true Oakleyites." Then followed the shoutings of lusty voices, till the roof-trees and rafters rang again; and then the village revellers adjourned to their homes through the broad avenues of the old park, awakening the echoes as they went with their noisy snatches of song.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This is as true collectively and socially as it is individually; and it was true of the sowing of Miles Oakley. Little as he was aware of it, his was not the sowing to produce good fruit. The indiscri-

minate generosity, reaching even to lavishness, in which he indulged, encouraged idleness and waste, if nothing worse. The feudal tie between himself and his neighbours, of which he was vain, and which he did his best to strengthen, brought about a kind of slavish cringing towards himself, and an insolent disrespect towards all besides, neither of which feelings were compatible with true and sturdy independence. And here we drop our pen.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### SHADES OF CHARACTER.

HAVING dwelt at some length on what may be considered the brighter side of the squire's character, we must mention one or two defects with which it was shaded.

In the first place, Miles Oakley was an earnest and hearty disliker. It is true, his prejudices were not easily roused. He would overlook, in a good-humoured way, a dozen offences which would have enraged an irritable man; but woe to the poor wight by whom his resentment was provoked. He never—or very rarely—forgave; and even the influence of his wife (in no other case unsuccessfully exerted) was almost powerless in this. He would follow his victim with steady purpose, and, when it was in his power, would crush him.

It must be said, however, that, in the few instances in which this course was pursued by him, the avenger discriminated between the offender and the offender's kith and kin. The hatred was personal and individual, not general and wide-spread. Thus, when Black Giles, on whom the squire had heaped unnumbered benefits from his youth upwards, ungratefully touched

his benefactor on the tenderest point, by mixing himself up with a gang of poachers, and guiding them into the choicest Oakley preserves, and was captured after a sanguinary struggle with the gamekeepers, led on by Miles Oakley himself, who fought like any three, as was afterwards said—I say, when Black Giles was for this heinous offence prosecuted without mercy, and—every engine of the law being set in motion to secure the severest punishment that could be inflicted—was transported for life, his wife and children thenceforward lived upon the squire's bounty, and received constant and special favours from his hands. He had no spite against the woman, he said, though he knew her to be a bad one; and, as to the boys and girls, he was not going to visit the sins of the father upon the children. So he set Tom Giles up in business, and when he failed he set him up again; and when he turned out so irretrievably dissipated and idle that money slipped between his fingers like water, he took the young fellow into his own service, and allowed him to cheat and rob him as he liked. And so with the rest of the family, who may be said to have lived in clover all the days of the squire's natural life. Then, indeed, came a change; but with this our story has nothing to do.

And now that I am on the subject, I would just note that nothing more quickly nor certainly aroused the anger of the good-tempered squire than to venture a doubt as to the righteousness and justice of the game laws, or to hint that animals, wild by nature, and untamed and unrestrained, are common property. He was, in fact—though he boasted of his Saxon blood—a true copyist of the Norman tyrant who “loved the red deer as though they were his children,” and thought no penalty too great for those who infringed his personal rights in this matter.

Thus, while Miles Oakley was a liberal and indulgent land-

lord, he tied down his farmer-tenants by the strictest clauses to respect his game.

"But the rabbits, your honour——" expostulated a farmer who pleaded the damage wrought by them on his green crops.

"The rabbits, Barton: if I ever know that you pull a trigger upon them, sir"—and he shook his riding-whip (good-humouredly and playfully, however) over Hodge Barton's head. "How are my foxes to be kept, Barton, unless they have rabbits to eat?"

Hodge ventured humbly to think that the world would go on very well if there were no foxes.

"No foxes! and what should *we* do, sir, if you were to do away with our field sports, sir?" He was waxing angry. "Do you suppose, sir, that country gentlemen would live upon their estates if—— but perhaps you will be saying next that the world would go on very well if there were no country gentlemen?"

Hodge Barton hastened to disavow so injurious a conception, but, sticking to his text, complained that, for all that, the "rabbits do do a deal of damage."

"Why don't you send in your bill of damages, then, Barton?" demanded the landlord. "Did I ever want to carry on my sports at my tenants' expense, sir?"

And upon this hint Hodge acted. At the yearly audit, he attended at "The Oaks," armed with a formidable document, the gist of which was a sum total of a hundred and sixteen pounds, nine and fourpence, as compensation for injuries inflicted on him by the squire's rabbits.

"In your conscience, do you believe this is a true bill?" asked Miles Oakley composedly.

"I do," said Hodge, unblushingly; "but I don't mind bating the sixteen pound odd."

"But I should mind it very much," rejoined the landlord,



**"HOW ARE MY FOXES TO BE KEPT?" ASKED THE SQUIRE.**



writing a cheque for the full amount, which he handed complacently to the tenant, who went away rejoicing. He did not see, however, that the squire wrote upon the counterfoil in his cheque-book, "*Mem.*—This Barton is a rascal. Get rid of him when his lease is out."

To pass to another and darker spot on the bright surface of Miles Oakley's character—he would brook no rival near his throne. Unsatisfied with his ample territorial possessions, he kept adding farm to farm, and field to field, until (with one exception) the whole country for many miles around "The Oaks" acknowledged him as its owner.

"With one exception," and this exception was to the squire the bane and gall of his life. Every Sunday, when he went to church, he saw, staring down upon him from above the communion-table, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house—nor anything that is thy neighbour's;" and from day to day, and fifty times a day, year by year, did he cast a coveting eye, and indulge in coveting desires, towards his neighbour William Franklin's eighty-acre farm, "The Lees," which lay not a mile from "The Oaks."

William Franklin was poor; the property was deeply mortgaged, and it was with difficulty that he could make both ends meet. Miles Oakley knew this; and, both directly and indirectly, he had made very tempting offers to the young farmer, which would have relieved him from his difficulties, and made him the flourishing, prosperous tenant of one of the squire's best farms. But Franklin was obstinate, and would not part with his inheritance. It had been his father's before him, and his grandfather's before *him*; and their ancestors before them, through he could not tell how many generations; and he was not going to part with it for all the squires in the kingdom. And what did the squire want with it? Hadn't he enough land already?



Thus the matter stood at the time when our story begins; and Miles Oakley was nourishing the serpent hate in his bosom against the perverse William Franklin. He had other causes of dislike, which still further envenomed his feelings; but of these I shall have more to say in another chapter.

Having thus cleared the way to the succeeding chronicles by these introductory explanations, it remains only to say that, in the eight or nine years following the marriage of the squire, he and his Lucy had once and again to mourn over blighted hopes and disappointed parental yearnings. Three infants, in due succession, had been born to them; and three tiny coffins had been, at intervals, deposited in the family vault beneath Oakley Church. At length hope dawned again; and a man-child, having survived the infantine diseases which had, in the other instances, been so fatal, reached the age of eighteen months, or two years perhaps, and was still living.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

AN OLD FARM-HOUSE, AND A YOUNG FARMER WHO KNEW MORE  
THAN WAS GOOD FOR HIM.

ONE autumnal morning, as the hands of the old-fashioned clock in the kitchen of the "The Lees" pointed to seven, William Franklin and his household sat down to breakfast. The party consisted of himself, his young wife, to whom he had been only three years married, and whose lap was now burdened by a stout chubby boy of two years; his widowed mother, an ailing, anxious-looking woman, of some fifty-five summers, whose whole life, from the day of her early espousals, had been spent in the old farm-house, and who, when her husband died, ten years ago, first carried on the business of the farm for her

son, then about eighteen years of age, and still remained as his housekeeper, and the adviser and helper of her inexperienced daughter-in-law; and a maid-servant, who had been some years a fixture in the establishment.

The early meal, though confusedly spread on the undamasked oaken table, around which the farmer and his family were seated, was ample in quantity and good of its sort. Tea and coffee were absent—the latter beverage being unknown at “The Lees,” except by name, and the former, at twelve shillings a pound, being reserved for the Sunday supper-time of the two Mrs. Franklins; but a huge skillet of new milk, just taken when at the boil from the fire, was poured into a large pan, over a mass of broken bread, from which pan each of the party helped himself or herself at pleasure—basins and spoons being implied in this arrangement.

This was but the first course, however, the slops, as the boiled milk may be denominated, being only a whet for the appetite, to regale itself afterwards upon the cold pickled pork, nearly six inches thick in solid fat, cold vegetables (the remains of yesterday’s dinner), hard and chalky-looking home-made cheese, and loaf of very brown bread, with which the aforesaid smoking dish was flanked. In addition to these substantial items in the bill of fare, was a large stone jug of table-beer, just brought up foaming from the cellar, and intended for washing down and assisting to digest the various solids of the feast. Such, O ye farmers and farmers’ wives of this present time, was the quality of the meal with which your progenitors commenced the dietary of the day!

The kitchen in which the table was thus spread was a large but low-pitched apartment, the walls and ceiling of which had become, by lapse of time since they were whitewashed, and by constant smoke, a rich brown colour, in some parts approaching

even to blackness. A long, narrow window of quarry-paned glass opened into the straw-yard, and admitted the compound odours of the stable, cow-house, and pig-sty, together with the grunting and squealing of a whole herd of pigs, then running loose. Two men were at work in this yard, loading a dung-cart, which operation added to the ammoniacal smells which pervaded the room. But farmers were not squeamish in those days.

The furniture and adornments of William Franklin's breakfast-room may be passed over without any particular notice, except on two points, one of which concerns the immediate progress of this history, while the other will throw some light on the character or opinions of the young farmer.

Over a door, then, which, if opened, would have disclosed a steep flight of stairs, leading to the sleeping apartments above, was a wooden rack, evidently intended as a rest for fire-arms. Two spaces in this rack were occupied, one by an old blunderbuss, which probably was a venerable heirloom, and had done execution in the civil wars, but was now past service, except, perhaps, for the scaring of birds; the other space, just below, was filled by a single-barrelled fowling-piece, so long in the barrel as to give an indication of wild-duck shooting, although it was neither long enough nor heavy enough for a legitimate duck-gun. Great care had been taken of this fowling piece, as was manifested by the high polish of the stock, and the unsullied brightness, undisfigured by a single speck of rust, of the flint-lock (percussions were then unknown) and barrel. Beneath this space, however, was a third, then unoccupied; while on an arm of the rack hung a heavy shot-belt and a powder-horn.

The other point to which reference has been made was the contents of a book-shelf, which hung over another door, opening into a small and rarely used parlour. This shelf was laden with about a dozen volumes—an old Bible and an equally

ancient book of Common Prayer being among the number. A more modern Gardener's Calendar and a Farmer's Vade Mecum, a Book of Farriery, and a Treatise on Sporting, made up the first half-dozen volumes of the scanty library. It is to one or two of the remaining half, however, to which we must call a moment's attention. The first of these was entitled "The Age of Reason," by Thomas Paine; the second, a work by the same author, called "The Rights of Man;" and the third was a "History of the (then recent) French Revolution," and written in vindication of the actors in that terrible convulsion. These works had been carefully read and studied, as was evidenced by the thumbbed and dog-eared condition of their pages. To avoid unnecessary periphrases, I will admit at once that William Franklin was the student; and a paragraph or two here respecting this young farmer may save future explanations and breaks in the current of our narrative.

Young Franklin, then, was both intelligent and mentally active. He was also tolerably well educated—better, at least, than the ordinary run of lads in his station of life in those days, although in some respects his education had been lamentably deficient, and in others ill-directed. Always struggling himself, or witnessing and sharing in the struggles of others, against that respectable poverty which I take to be the hardest kind of poverty to be borne, his mind was warped into dissatisfaction; and he would have been gloomily morose if constitutional cheerfulness had not stepped in to qualify his acquired misanthropy. It did not remove it, however; and many circumstances had combined to heighten his susceptibility, not only of what he conceived to be his own wrongs, but the wrongs of others.

For Franklin *had* suffered wrong. The heavy mortgage on his ancestral estate had thrown him into the power of men who

knew how, and did not scruple, to abuse that power to their own advantage and to his heavy loss : this was the first wrong. The second was, perhaps, more fancied, but not the less grievous. Occasionally he was cast into the society of, or brought into collision with, men of higher rank and station than his own, but with far less brains and sterling character. By such men he was sometimes bullied, and at other times treated with insolent condescension, until his blood boiled, and his tongue gave words to sentiments which, to say the least of them, had better have been left unuttered.

Of all men around him, the squire of "The Oaks" had made himself especially obnoxious to William Franklin. His attempts, both open and covert, to obtain possession of the poor half-titled farm, which was all the dearer to the young farmer as it seemed to be slipping out of his grasp ; the watchful eye kept upon him by the squire's gamekeepers, as he walked over his paternal acres with his gun ; and a difference in political sentiments, stretching on the one side to High Toryism, and on the other to what was then called rank Jacobinism, and carried out on both sides to violent partisanship—all these things, and some others, had inspired Franklin with a bitter detestation of Miles Oakley, not less unreasonable and sinful than was the squire's hearty dislike towards the young farmer.

It was in vain that Franklin's mother and his young wife sometimes endeavoured to soften down the rancour of his feelings, by reminding him that the squire of "The Oaks" had numerous good qualities to compensate for the misfortune of his being born to wealth and station ; he argued that these showy qualities (he would not acknowledge them to be good) only gave the greater power for mischief. They told him of the squire's benevolence and open-handed generosity to the poor ; and he replied, in the words of a writer of his day, that "if the poor

had more justice, they would need less charity"—an axiom of sterling truth and universal application, but liable, perhaps, to perversion. In short, it was open and undisguised warfare between William Franklin and Miles Oakley, with every disadvantage on the side of the young and impoverished farmer.

Then came the pernicious literature which has been mentioned, to poison and confuse an intellect which was capable of better things, and which a purer, sounder course of study would have cleared from the mists of prejudice, and enlightened. From thenceforth, William Franklin raved about the miseries of artificial society, the state of the nation, the causes of discontent, the rights of man, the iniquities of aristocracies, with other kindred subjects; and, as he was neither mealy-mouthed nor cautious as to the company in which he gave utterance to his creed, he was soon set down, as others of that day were, and with no greater reason—as a revolutionist, a conspirator, and an atheist.

We beg pardon for detaining the reader so long from the breakfast-table at "The Lees," to which we now return.

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## CHAPTER V.

### A CONVERSATION.

"**Y**OU have made up your mind to go, then, William?" said the elder woman, with more than a usual shade of anxiety gathering upon her pallid countenance.

"Yes, mother," replied the young farmer, who, it might have been noted, was rather sprucely attired, and clean shaven, as though prepared for a journey, while at the same time he was eating his breakfast with unusual gravity and silence: "Yes

mother; there's no reason why I should not go, I suppose?" he added, almost gloomily.

"No particular reason, William; only as you gave your vote the first day of the election, it does not need for you to go to town again on the last day of the poll."

"I want to know the state of the poll, mother; and I mean to be in at the death," said William.

"That's only an excuse, Will," retorted the mother, who had in earlier life kept a rather tight rein on her son, and sometimes now forgot the difference between eighteen and twenty-eight; "you know well enough what the state of the poll was yesterday, and that your man is sure to get licked; and what do you want, mixing yourself up so much with politics? Your father didn't use to do so."

"I know that very well, mother; at least, you have told me so often enough; and what the better was he for not doing it?"

"He stayed at home and minded his own business," returned the old matron; "and that is more than can be said of you at all times."

"Mother, mother!" softly whispered the young wife, looking up entreatingly towards her mother-in-law; "you ought not to say of William that he neglects his business."

"What is he going to do to-day?" asked the elder Mrs. Franklin, pettishly.

"But, mother, it is his business—being a freeholder, you know—to see that things are right and fair at election times," continued the younger woman; "besides, William has other business in town," she added.

"I don't know of any other business, without it is to fetch his double-barrelled gun from the smith's," said the mother; "but then, may-be, I have no right to know anything about Will's goings out and comings in, as I used to do."

"Mother, don't let us wrangle," interposed the subject of this gentle sparring; "you have every right to know everything; and if I don't tell you everything at all times, it is because you should not be over troubled. And you know that I have kept from going to town all along, while this election has lasted, since the day I gave in my vote, because you said 'Don't go.' But I want to see how it ends; and I have got to call upon Lawyer Peake as well; and it won't do to put that off."

"Not about that weary mortgage, my boy?" exclaimed the mother, her short-lived irritation over. "Has there anything fresh turned up about that?"

"Yes, mother; Peake has written to say that the mortgage money is wanted, and that he has got orders to foreclose if it is not paid home in three months' time."

"You don't say that, Will?" cried his mother, in a tone of great agitation.

"*He* says it, mother; and I suppose he means it too," said Franklin; and then he added, more cheerfully, "but don't fret, it may all come right. There's plenty of money to be got on mortgage, and perhaps on better terms. The worst of it is, that there's somebody else at the bottom of it, and if he can put a spoke in the wheel he will. It is my firm belief that Lawyer Peake is in his pay, for all he is so smooth."

"You mean the squire, I know, William."

"Yes, mother, I do mean the squire."

"I can't believe in his doing anything underhanded, William," said the elderly advocate.

"And I don't think it of him either," added the younger Mrs. Franklin. "I wish you were not so set against Mr. Oakley, William," she added.

"Master is right enough about the squire, though," interposed Martha, the servant-maid, who was accustomed to take her



share unchecked in the table-talk, with a freedom which would astonish modern masters and mistresses. "I know something of him that you won't like to hear, master," she went on.

"What is that, Martha?" demanded Franklin.

"It is about the shooting, master: he says you have gone on shooting without taking out a licence long enough, and he means to put a stop to it. Dick Border told Tom so only yesterday."

"He had better try his hand at it, that's all," remarked the young farmer; "if it comes to stopping, we'll see which is the best man of us two; and if I find out that he has a hand in this mortgage business——"

"Don't threaten, William," pleaded his wife, laying her hand upon his arm; "that won't do any good, will it?"

"You are right, Letty. It is only women and lawyers who have licence to fight with their tongues, and I am neither one nor the other; when I fight it will be with some other weapon. But what's the use of talking?" added Franklin, and making an evident effort to shake off his ill-humour. "It is time for me to be starting; and there's Brown Bess to be saddled." Saying this, he hurried from the table to the farm-yard.

In a few minutes the young farmer returned, with a fresh cloud on his brow. He had discovered that Brown Bess, his riding mare, was lame of the off fore-foot, and could not travel.

"You can't go, then, after all?" said his wife.

"I shall have to walk instead of to ride, that's all; and ten miles is no such mighty stretch," said he.

"Twelve miles, William."

"Yes, round by the road; but I shall save two miles by cutting across from here to Broadley Rise, you know."

"Through the squire's plantations?"

"There's a right of way there, though he denies it," said Franklin; "you know that, mother, do you not?"

"There always used to be a way through Hanging Wood to Broadley Rise from here," said the old dame.

"And nobody has had any business to stop it," added the young farmer.

"But if you should be interrupted?" continued the wife, hesitatingly.

"Why, then, Letty, they that interrupt me must look out for themselves," said William, grasping the stout walking-staff which he had substituted for his riding-whip.

"You will have your own way, William," said Letty.

"Yes, when I know it is the right way, and can get it, my pretty—as I did when I married you; and now good-bye;" and when Franklin stooped down to kiss his wife's cheek every trace of discomposure was gone.

"I will go with you through the close," said the young wife, rising, and carrying her child in her arms. In a minute or two she was relieved of this weight by her husband, who, having bidden his mother good-bye, insisted on carrying Willy across the meadow on his shoulder.

"Promise me one thing, William," said Letty, when they parted.

"Two things, Letty, if that will please you."

"I want you to promise me faithfully that you will not quarrel with anybody to-day," said she.

"Why, my darling, what an ill-tempered fellow you would make me out to be, to need such a warning as that!" rejoined Franklin, laughing.

"Not ill-tempered, William, but warm-tempered sometimes."

"Well, I should hope so. Which is best, Lotty, to be warm-tempered or cold-blooded? Which would you like best for your share of it?"

"I would not have you in any way different to *me*, William;

but it is not everybody that understands you as I do. So please to promise me," continued Letty, reverting to her request.

"Whom do you suppose I am likely to fall out with, Letty?" asked William.

Letty had not thought of any one in particular, she said; but it was election time, when men were sometimes provoked into quarrels; and there was the squire, and there were a good many of his people, who would be likely to be in the town. And if William would keep out of their way, and come home as early as he could—wouldn't he promise?

It would have required more obduracy than William Franklin possessed to resist this gentle pleading. Indeed, he had no desire to resist it. He was peaceably enough inclined, and was not in the habit either of sitting long over his cups or of being out late. He had no enmity against any one in particular, excepting Miles Oakley, and it was altogether improbable that they would come into contact that day; and even if they did, an open quarrel was not likely to ensue.

"I'll promise to be very good, Letty, and come home as sober as a judge—in good time, too," said he, as he delivered up Willy; and then, after another good-bye, the husband strode on towards Broadley Rise, and his wife stood watching till he was out of sight, and thinking in her heart that there was not such another man as her William all the country round.

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## CHAPTER VI.

## INCIDENTS OF AN ELECTION A LONG WHILE AGO.

THE country-town towards which William Franklin was bending his steps, and which, to avoid needless identification, we shall call by the initial H., had been for fourteen days in a state of high ferment, in consequence of a contested election for a member of Parliament. It is foreign from our purpose to explain at any length the state of parties, either in "the House" or in the country, at this particular time; we may briefly intimate, however, that there had been some recent upheavings of the popular element of society in opposition to the very highly conservative government of that day; and that the political and social commotions which had lately transpired, and were yet transpiring in other lands, while giving both force and significance to the general discontent, also roused those who appropriated the merit of true patriotism, to rally round the standard of their party, and to battle fiercely for those very excrescences and abuses which elsewhere had led to such deplorable results, and which, in subsequent days, have been wisely modified or removed, to the manifest advantage of the country at large and the stability of the crown.

These temporary political struggles and alarms, which, it may be added, were fermented, kept alive, and intensified by government spies, added point and virulence to the electioneering contest to which we have referred. Though hopeless of success, the Man of the People (a scion of one of the few titled families who at that time ventured to avow popular opinions) had kept open the poll to the latest day allowed by law, and had gathered around him a strange and motley band, composed of the best and worst specimens of national character—men of the

highest principle and soundest information, and others of no principle and the profoundest ignorance and most violent prejudices. These were the extremes; and between these were many who, like the farmer of the "The Lees," had honest intentions and confused perceptions—a consciousness that there was wrong and mismanagement somewhere, and an instinctive yearning after something better in the matter of government, though what that something should be, it would have been hard for them to say.

On the other hand, the ambiguous and unmeaning cries of "Church and State," "The Agricultural Interest," "Speed the Plough," "No Foreign Influence," "Old England for ever," "Down with the Jacobins," and a dozen others equally sonorous and captivating, resounded from the adverse ranks of the opposing candidate. Around this gentleman, who arrogated to himself the title of a "Free-born Briton," and boasted, not without reason, of his stake in Old England and its glorious constitution, rallied the landed gentry and those who styled themselves the farmers' friends. As we have already intimated, their influence and interest predominated, and the evil day which was to see the sun of England set for ever in gloomy darkness was, for that time, indefinitely postponed.

Among the friends and supporters of this successful and patriotic candidate was none more enthusiastic than Miles Oakley; and none hated more heartily than he, not only the principles which he termed revolutionary, and which he honestly believed tended to national ruin, but also the men who had imbibed them. To evince his zeal for the cause he espoused, he headed, from day to day, batches of his tenantry, whom he (as his opponents averred) compelled to tender their votes at the poll according to his dictation; but this was a mistake, or a calumny; for what farmer of that day would have dreamt of

voting contrary to the opinions of his landlord? From day to day, too, he scoured the country round, to convert waverers by his persuasive eloquence, and then made his appearance on the hustings or in the committee room, to cheer on his friends with his hearty co-operation and beaming presence.—N.B. In the times of which we are telling, fourteen polling days were allowed in county elections.

Meanwhile, the town of H. rejoiced as in a carnival. Business was suspended, but money was plentiful. Inns were thronged, and rival bands, parading the streets from day to day, made confusion worse confounded by their discordant brayings.

Towards this scene of turmoil William Franklin drew near—the time being eleven o'clock of a sultry autumnal day. He was not in particularly high spirits; for he was keenly alive to the impending and certain defeat of the candidate for whom he had voted, and to the triumph of the ministry, which, according to his belief, was one of the most venal, corrupt, and tyrannical governments with which the country had been cursed for at least a century; and this, he would have acknowledged, was saying a great deal. But, besides this source of vexation, with which you, reader, if you happen to be a "true and independent freeman and elector," can sympathise, Franklin had his own private grievances to stir up his bile. These grievances, over which a solitary walk of ten miles had given him ample time to ponder, have been already indicated; but it should be added that his mind was more disturbed than he had chosen to confess to his mother, respecting the threatened foreclosure of the mortgage on his farm. That mortgage, with which the farm was burdened before he was born, was a thousand pounds, the yearly interest of which was equal to a fair rental for the whole estate, as rents went then; and he had grave doubts as to whether any

other capitalist could be found willing to advance that sum on the transfer of the deeds. What, then, would follow but utter and irretrievable ruin to himself, and the misery of seeing his ancestral acres passing into the possession of a man whom of all others he most cordially disliked ?

He was thinking sadly of all this, and picturing to himself the triumph of his enemy, when he stepped upon the bridge which formed the entrance to the town itself. There were not many passengers, for the interest of the election had drawn loungers to the polling-place by the market. Before he had reached the crown of the bridge, however, he heard the clattering of horses' hoofs behind him, and before he could draw to the side of the narrow causeway, he was in the midst of a dozen or more riders, talking and laughing noisily ; and as they were riding fast, and paying little heed to bit and bridle, there was a trifling danger of the solitary pedestrian being run down. Indeed, ere the boisterous troop had passed him, Franklin received a rough brush from the shoulder of one of the horses, which nearly prostrated him ; and the collision was so violent as for a moment to take away his breath.

Until then, our young farmer had not had sufficient curiosity to look up at the riders ; but now he turned sharply upon the man who had either intentionally or clumsily ridden him down ; and a dark crimson spot gathered instantaneously on his cheek, for his assailant was none other than the squire of "The Oaks," who was entering the town with a band of his fellow partisans, to witness and share in the final victory of their chosen candidate, whose colours they flaunted on their breasts.

At any other time, and from any other person, Franklin would have attributed the rude jolt he had received to accident, and with a gentle hint to the horseman to be more careful of the life and limb of the king's lieges in future, would have suffered

him to pass on his way. But suddenly excited as he was, and aroused to bitter resentment by what passion told him was an intentional and personal insult, the young farmer sprang forward, seized the squire's horse by the bridle, and angrily demanded an apology from the rider.

There was no time nor opportunity for explanation or parley. The horse, a powerful, young and spirited steed of seventeen hands, curveted, kicked, and reared at the unexpected check thus received; and Miles Oakley, for the first time recognising the pedestrian, and scarcely conscious of the offence he had given, but rather attributing the attack to some strange outburst of electioneering enmity, stuck spurs into his horse, and raised his heavy riding-whip.

The blow fell; and in another moment the humiliated young farmer, smarting beneath the double indignity, saw the whole cortege sweeping on, and heard shouts of laughter from the party of horsemen.

"And I promised poor Letty that I would not quarrel," thought William Franklin to himself, when he was cool enough to think at all.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE LAWYER AND HIS CLIENT; SHOWING THE DISADVANTAGE OF BEING POOR.

**M**R. PEAKE'S offices were in a busy part of the High Street of H.; and on the day of the election they were pretty well thronged with visitors, Mr. Peake being one of the agents of the successful candidate, and having sundry arrangements to conclude with certain free and independent electors, whose votes he had been instrumental in securing for his party.



It was high noon, and the attorney was seated in his own private office, when the door once more opened to admit another client, whose flushed face and contracted brow told of inward discomposure, and on whose hat was displayed a large favour which marked him as a political opponent. Mr. Peake, however, had clients of all shades of politics: and he knew pretty well how to steer his course clear of giving or receiving personal affronts on a subject which, to him, was little more than a matter of business. He received his visitor courteously, therefore, and requested him to be seated.

"I had your letter, sir," said the latter, bluntly.

"Yes, I presume so, Franklin."

"And I should be glad to know whether what you wrote is really meant, sir."

"There cannot be a doubt about it. My client is anxious to realise—wants the money, in fact, for another purpose."

"I have always paid the interest to the day, sir; and so did my father before me," pleaded Franklin.

"You certainly have; if everybody were as punctual as you have been, there would be less work for us lawyers," rejoined Mr. Peake, laughing.

"Well, sir, it seems rather hard, at such a short notice, too."

"Most people think it hard to have to pay money," said the attorney, drily, "at least, I generally find it to be so; but, excuse me, this is a busy day; couldn't you see me some other time on this business?"

"I won't hinder you long, sir; but I don't want to go home without having my mind set at rest. If I must pay off the mortgage, I must; and I must take up the money somewhere else."

"By renewing the mortgage, you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, there can be no objection to that, of course, if you can manage it. Have you any one in view?" asked Mr. Peake.

"That's the very thing I have not. I must look to you, sir to get the money for me," said the young farmer.

The lawyer shook his head.

"I am a poor hand at asking favours, Mr. Peake," continued William Franklin; "but the thing must be done somehow; and of course it will bring grist to your mill."

"That is all very well, Franklin; and it is easy for you to think that I can do anything for money; but, to be frank with you, I am afraid I shall not be able to manage this matter to your satisfaction. Cannot you look up the money without my help?"

It was Franklin's turn to shake his head now.

"You cannot? Well, then, I don't think I can either."

"Then I must get somebody else to act for me," said the client, half-rising; "but I must say, sir——"

"No, I would not; pray don't say anything: it is not worth while for us to quarrel, you know," interposed the attorney.

"Quarrel! I don't know what should make you think that I want to quarrel, Mr. Peake," responded the young farmer, uncomfortably thinking of Letty's warning, and fancying that, after all, he was a more ill-tempered fellow than he had supposed himself to be. "You don't want to pick a quarrel with me, do you, sir?" he added.

"So far from that, Franklin, I wish to do you good, if I can," said the other quietly; "and if you will only hear what I have to say, I will prove it."

"I am much obliged to you, I am sure," said William, more humbly than he had spoken before; adding, that he had need of somebody to give him advice, for he was well nigh desperate at times.

"That is very well said, Franklin," said Mr. Peake; "and what I have to advise lies in a nut-shell. But, first of all, take a glass of wine;" and the attorney reached a decanter and glass from a cupboard at his elbow, and poured out for his client.

"It is good sherry, or ought to be," he continued; "for it cost me—however, that's nothing to the purpose, and my time is short."

Franklin was not a very self-indulgent man; but he liked a glass of good wine; he was flattered, moreover, by the lawyer's hospitality. Besides, he had walked ten miles without wetting his lips more than once on the road, and the wine was acceptable. He wished Mr. Peake a "very good health," therefore, and sipped.

"And now, to come to the point, Franklin; you are poor, you know. There is no harm in saying that, is there?"

"Not a bit of harm, Mr. Peake. And another thing is, I would not be poor if I could help it," replied the young farmer.

"I suppose none of us would, though we may happen to stand up for equal rights, and a redistribution of property, and all that sort of thing."

This was a stroke at one of William Franklin's supposed political crotchets; so, at least, he understood it, and it made him wince. The attorney did not follow up his attack, however.

"At all events," he continued, "you and your father before you have struggled, manfully I will say, to get rid of the incubus of this heavy mortgage; but you have not succeeded."

"True enough, Mr. Peake," groaned William.

"And what is worse, you have been for years getting more and more behind-hand. You know that I know this, so there is no indelicacy in my mentioning it, you see."

Franklin did not exactly see this: but he knew that it was

true enough that the lawyer had reasonable grounds for his assertion.

"If it were not for that bothering interest, I should do well enough," he said.

"Exactly so: it is that bothering interest that does the mischief in more instances than yours; but when money is borrowed, interest must be paid," argued Mr. Peake.

"There's no doubt about that, sir."

"And yet you want to go on borrowing? You must be strangely infatuated."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Peake; but you are wrong there. I am not at all infatuated. I have no love for being in any one's debt; and I would not be, if I could help it; but you know the old saying, sir, about 'Needs must,' and the rest of it."

"And you are content to be driven, I suppose. Now let me give you my advice. Pay off this mortgage, and have done with the system altogether."

"That's very easily said, sir," said William, bitterly.

"And as easily done. The fact is you are getting deeper and deeper into the mire, and you know it. Why not do now, what you can but know it will come to at last? You have no capital to farm with. Everything is swallowed up by that bothering interest, as you justly call it. You ought to sell your farm out and out; you *must* sell, Franklin."

The poor client bit his lips; but he was wise enough to restrain himself at that moment; and the attorney went on—

"You will be able to get a good price; and, at the present time, you may clear out, when all your debts are paid, with several hundred pounds in your pocket. There are plenty of farms to be had on fair terms; and as a tenant farmer, you may do what you never have been able to do on your own land—you may make money, Franklin."

There is a kind of advice, the sting of which is in its obvious truth. Franklin had told himself all this before, but without effect, and it was none the less bitter to have it told him to his face. He still restrained himself, however.

"You don't know what it is, Mr. Peake," he said, meekly enough, but with subdued emotion, "to have even to think of parting with what has belonged to you and your family so long back."

"I can understand your feelings, at any rate; and I can respect them," replied Mr. Peake; "but, as you said just now, Franklin, 'Needs must when—;' I need not repeat the proverb."

"After all," continued the client, his countenance brightening as he saw, or fancied he saw, a weak point in his adviser's argument, "I don't see how your plan would help me. Before I can sell, even if I had a mind to it, I must find a buyer; and then, what with lawyers' work—begging your pardon, Mr. Peake—but you gentlemen do take your time at it, and we cannot do without you."

"Not very well in all cases, Franklin," said the attorney, smiling; "the more the pity, perhaps," he added.

"Pity or no pity, Mr. Peake, we must put up with it till things alter, at any rate; and you know well enough, sir, that there isn't such a thing as selling an acre of land without proving titles, and making out conveyances, and a good deal more besides."

"No, not much more, except paying for having it done, you know."

"And that comes as a matter of course; but what I mean is that before all that is done, supposing I had a mind to do it, which I have not, and the signing and sealing was over, six months or more will have passed away, and——"

"And in the meantime, in comes the mortgagee and fore-closes," said the lawyer; "but there is a way of meeting that difficulty. Suppose we say that instead of six months, we could get through the business in six days? Even lawyers can do their work quickly if they choose—and cheaply, too," he added, insinuatingly.

"That's as much as to say that you would, sir; though I don't know why you should, I am sure."

"Well, say, for instance, that I take an interest in your welfare, Franklin?"

The young farmer opened his eyes wide. Mr. Peake certainly had never evinced so much interest in his concerns before.

"I wish to help you," continued the attorney; "and I will do it by repeating my honest advice. You are an embarrassed man, and I show you the way out of your embarrassments."

"By telling me that I must sell my farm." A sudden thought struck him—"Is there not somebody else you want to serve, Mr. Peake? Who is to be the buyer?"

"I'll tell you another day, Franklin, if you make up your mind to follow my advice," replied the attorney.

"Is it Squire Oakley?" asked the young farmer, rising, with a flushed face, his voice trembling with passion.

"I am not prepared to answer the question, Franklin," said the lawyer, watching keenly his client's countenance; "but put it as if it were so, and say that Mr. Oakley is still willing to come to terms and give you a liberal——"

Passion forced its way at last, and burst through the barriers of prudence. Before the attorney could complete the sentence he had begun, the young farmer had thrown off his coat, and stripped up the shirt-sleeve of his right arm.

"Don't be frightened, Mr. Peake," said he, as the lawyer,

naturally enough, started from his seat, and retreated a pace or two from his apparently pugnacious client; "I am not going to do anything violent; but, do you see this, and this?"—and he laid his finger on two broad red and blue wheals, reaching from shoulder to elbow. In part the skin was broken, and blood—scarcely yet dry—had trickled from the lacerated wound. "Do you see it, Mr. Peake?" he repeated.

"Franklin! what do you mean?" exclaimed the attorney, with a shudder. "How came you by those cuts? and why do you show them to me, in that fierce manner? Cover your arm up—cover it up, my good fellow; I am not a surgeon, you know."

"Well, sir, you *have* seen them," said the client, as he deliberately readjusted his sleeve and replaced his coat; "and you may just understand those cuts, as you call them, as an answer to Miles Oakley when he comes to you the next time, about buying my farm."

"I understand nothing of the sort, Franklin," said the attorney, somewhat irritated by the proceedings of his client. "If you have been foolish enough to get into an election fight, and have come off the worst, you have only yourself to thank for it. Or, if you have been assaulted without provocation, there's your remedy in law; and though your colours and mine are different, I'll see you through it. But why you should lay it on Mr. Oakley, as though he had anything to do with it——"

"It was the cowardly hound himself that did it, Mr. Peake," said the young farmer. "As to the cuts, do you think I should care about them in a fair stand-up fight? But to be struck in this way by a big bully on horseback, when I hadn't the power to give him as good as he sent——"

"Are you speaking of Mr. Oakley, Franklin?"

"I am speaking of the man who has made you a go-between

about buying my farm, Mr. Peake; and you may tell him from me, that the time may come sooner than he thinks, for paying back this insult and all others he has given me, with interest. And as to his ever setting foot on my land as his own"—he took up the half-emptied glass of wine as he spoke, and deliberately poured it out upon the floor—"when you can put back that wine into the glass, Mr. Peake, he shall do it, and not before."

The next moment the attorney was alone.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THE HUMOURS OF AN ELECTION, SHOWING THAT WHEN THE WINE IS IN, THE WIT IS OUT.

AT four o'clock the poll was finally closed. There was no need to proclaim who was victor; but, according to time-honoured custom, the represented were invited to the hustings, to receive from the returning officer the authoritative announcement, and a formal introduction to their representative.

The market-place was crowded; so were the surrounding house-tops and windows; so were the hustings. Bands played, banners floated, the mob shouted. Meanwhile, shopmen and apprentices were rapidly and nervously putting up shop shutters; for it was not difficult to see that a storm was likely enough to burst—a storm of human passions.

Dark blue and red: light blue and buff. The first were the winning colours: the last the losing; but the numbers in the market-place were pretty nearly equal.

True to his intention to witness the close of the election, William Franklin had stationed himself in front, and at a short distance from the hustings, surrounded by a stout band of



brawny electors, blue and buff. It was easy to see that our young farmer was excited. He was not intoxicated : he would have despised himself if he had so far forgotten his own self-respect ; but he had drunk more than was customary with him, and the effects of these unaccustomed potations were visible enough in his flushed and feverish countenance, sparkling eyes, and the loud tones in which he addressed the friends with whom he had fallen in when he left the lawyer's office, and in whose company he yet remained.

Unfortunately, a sight which met him soon after he had taken up his position in the crowd was not calculated to restore his equanimity. Right before him on the hustings, and at not more than a dozen yards' distance, stood his enemy, the squire, with his good-humoured, beaming countenance, rendered more smiling and genial by the consciousness of victory for his party ; and by his side, and in close conversation with him, was the attorney, Mr. Peake. Neither of them at first noticed Franklin, who stood glaring defiance and scorn upon them both. Presently, however, he caught the attorney's eye, and received from him a familiar nod ; and the next instant Mr. Oakley's attention was directed towards the young farmer.

If William Franklin could have heard what then immediately passed between these two men, his feelings of natural resentment might have been considerably modified towards them both ; for Mr. Peake, who had taken the trouble to inquire into the particulars of the unhappy rencontre which had taken place, and was convinced that the squire was considerably to blame in the matter, was representing to that gentleman the effect of the hard strokes he had given, and urging him to apologize, while the squire, who was at that moment disposed to be on good terms with all the world, now that his cause had triumphed, and besides, was really sorry for his own passionate violence,

was expressing his regret at the occurrence, and promising to call on Franklin the next day, with an offer of reconciliation.

"If you would only speak to him now, and tell him that you are sorry, and that it was all a mistake," suggested the attorney, "it might pave the way for a friendly understanding about the purchase, Mr. Oakley."

The hint was an unfortunate hint, because it implied a motive of self-interest.

"No, no, it shan't be said that I curried favour with the fellow to gain my own ends either," said the squire. "I would rather fight it out in a fair action at law, Peake: and that's more in your way, too. And, by the way, that would be the best thing for Franklin, too. He is so pig-headed that he would refuse anything I might offer by way of compensation; but if he got a good swingeing sum for damages, and fancied that he was making me pay it against my stomach, it would go down sweet enough, and would do him some good as well—eh?"

The conversation was cut short by the appearance of the returning officer, and attention being demanded to the business of the hour. And then the uprising of the successful candidate to return thanks for the honour conferred on him, was the signal for a storm of cheers on the one hand, met by an equally loud and uproarious tempest of groans and hisses from the disappointed partisans of the rejected. Presently, however, the tumult of tongues was partially appeased, and the honourable member for Blankshire commenced his speech.

Our attention must now revert to William Franklin, who with folded arms and contracted brow stood a silent but not uninterested spectator of the scene. Only now and then his lips curled at the platitudes which fell from the lips of the speaker, who enlarged upon "the glorious constitution of Old England,"

and "the flag which had braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze."

[Great applause from the dark blue and reds, with shouts of "Humbug!" from the light blue and buffs.]

"I won't say," the orator went on, "that there are some among us so debased, so degenerate, so—so unworthy the name of Britons, as that they would rejoice to see that flag lowered, hauled down, trodden under foot, and dragged in the mire." [Cries of "Oh! oh!"] "I won't say," he continued, "that these degenerate men, in these unquiet times of national trial and foreign intrigues, would play into the hands of our natural enemies." [Shouts of "Who are they?" followed by encouraging applause.] "I say of our natural enemies across the Channel." [Interruption, with cries of "No wooden shoes! No frog soup! Old English roast beef for ever!"] "Yes, roast beef and plum pudding too," said the speaker, catching inspiration from the suggestion. "I won't say that—that—" ["What *will* you say, old fellow?" from a voice in the crowd.] "I won't say," persisted the orator, "that these degenerate, degraded minions of a foreign court—in foreign pay—would gladly see our glorious constitution overturned, and—" [The rest of the sentence was lost amidst the confusion of tongues.] "No, gentlemen, freeholders, and electors, I won't say any of these things." ["You had better not, you lubber," from another voice in the crowd.] "Our cause has triumphed, and we can afford to be magnanimous. We have had a good stand-up fight, and our cause has come off victorious, as it always will, for '*Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.*'" [Great shouting from the dark blue and reds, groans of derision from the light blue and buffs, with a cry of "None of your French lingo here! Bothered if he isn't half a Frenchman himself," followed by a loud laugh.] "Great is truth, and it will prevail, gentlemen," continued the orator ;

"and we have prevailed, too——" "Stop till next time, old fellow; and we'll see who will prevail then." "We have prevailed, I say; and can afford to be generous. So, I say, let by-gones be by-gones; forget and forgive."\*

Through the whole of this address, Franklin had listened quietly enough to the speaker until he spoke of forgiving and forgetting; then the mouldering fire in his veins blazed up afresh. Throwing off his coat, he, not for the first time that day, bared his bruised and swollen arm, and, holding it up in sight of the hustings, demanded if those were among the by-gone things which were to be "forgotten and forgiven?"

The effect was electric. The blues and buffs, by whom the young farmer was surrounded, had heard some confused report of an assault committed by the squire of "The Oaks;" and the livid marks of his whip on the flesh of their fellow-electors gave reasonable ground, as they would have argued, for the outpouring of their hitherto restrained feeling of chagrin and baffled hopes of returning the popular candidate. And a piece of inexcusable folly in the squire raised this feeling to a pitch of temporary madness. He was, in fact, considerably shocked at the first sight of the effects of his desperate blows, although they were, as he afterwards averred, stricken in self-defence, and to save himself from being thrown from his high-spirited horse. But in proportion as he was shocked and vexed with himself, so was he mortified at being thus publicly exposed and denounced, not only by the injured man, but by the unwashed mob, as he perhaps might have said; and that in the face of hundreds whose good opinion he valued. This feeling of mortification conquered for a time the impulse of his natural good-temper and manly sympathy, and, without staying to reflect, either on

\* Unless the present writer is much mistaken, worse election speeches than the above have been made in much more modern times.

the character or probable results of the action, he drew out his purse, took two guineas from it, and, before his better angel, in the shape of Mr. Peake, could hold back his hand, he had thrown the golden coins contemptuously towards his neighbour of "The Lees," with some reference to that being the best sort of plaster for *him*.

In another moment all was confusion. Howls, execrations, fierce shouts, inspiring party cries, were heard from hundreds of throats; missiles were thrown at those on the hustings; bats and bludgeons were brandished; blows were stricken; the anticipated storm had burst.

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## CHAPTER IX.

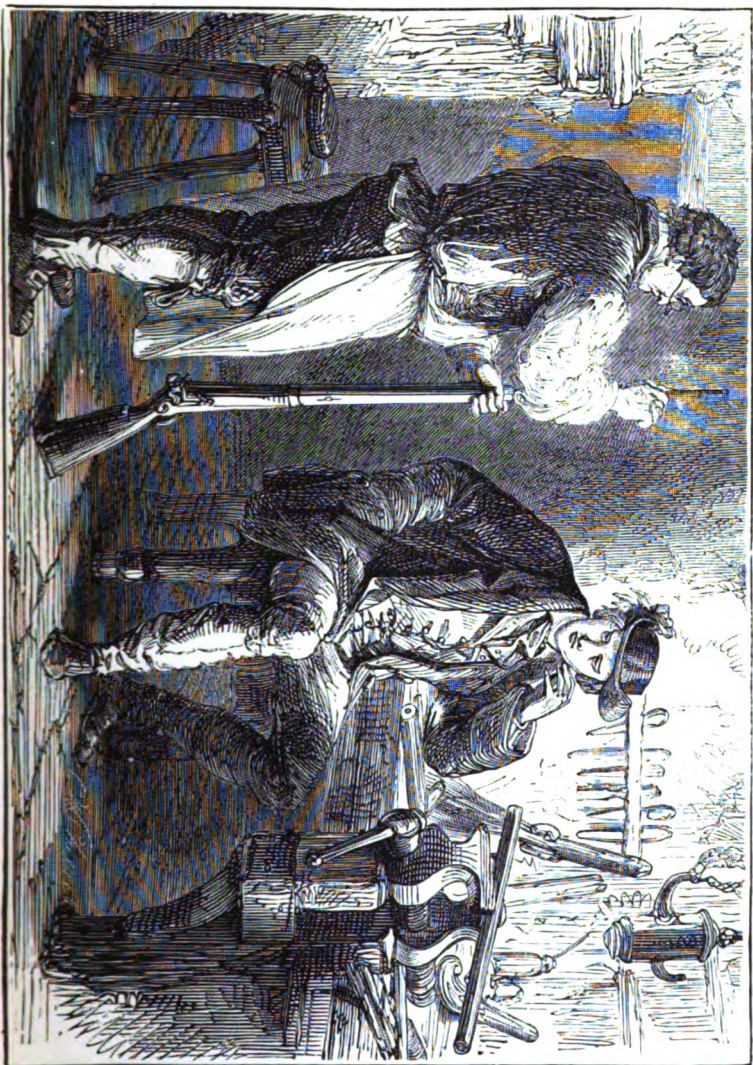
### THE GUNSMITH.

IT was eight o'clock in the evening before Franklin had disengaged himself from the throng of half-drunken voters, with whom, for the last three hours, he had been a sort of hero, and bethought himself of his promise to return home early. Having successfully combated their urgent invitation to finish the evening with them, at one of the open houses of the blue and buff party, he hurried along the streets of H., and was passing through a back lane, when a light in a shop window reminded him of his gunsmith. He accordingly entered, and found that artificer at his bench.

"Hard at work, Mr. Lemmon, I see."

"I don't know about hard, Master Franklin; but I have got a job I must finish to-night."

"You have not seen the sport, then?"



FRANKLIN THINKS HE MAY FALL IN WITH A FOX BEFORE HE REACHES HOME.



"Well, no : I have heard something of it, though ; and, being a peaceable sort of man myself, I thought I was as well out of it. And you, farmer—why, bless me !"—looking up attentively for the first time at his customer—"you look as if you had been in the wars, at any rate. Why, you have got a broken head, Master Franklin."

"Oh, nothing to signify ; a gentle Tory reminder, that's all. All fair play. It made my head swim a little bit for a minute or two ; but my skull is tolerably thick."

"Every man to his taste," said Mr. Lemmon, "and mine does not lay that way. But hadn't you better wash yourself a bit ? You don't cut a very nice figure to go home in."

"Why, what's the matter ?" demanded the young farmer, who was unconscious of the blood that had hardened on his forehead and cheek, from a slight cut he had received in the past skirmish. Being accommodated with a looking-glass, however, he willingly accepted the gunsmith's offer, and felt all the better, he said, for a copious ablution.

"You'll be after your gun, I suppose ?" said Mr. Lemmon, when the young farmer had re-adjusted his neck-cloth.

"I may as well take it home if it is done," said Franklin.

The gun was ready for him, and was put into his hands.

"Not charged, I suppose ?" said he, examining the lock.

"Of course not, Mr. Franklin ; but if you have a mind for a pop by moonlight, there's powder and shot handy."

"Um—it will be ready for to-morrow, at all events. Suppose you load it for me."

"Both barrels, of course ?"

"Yes, both barrels. By the way, put in number one ; there's a fox about my farm, and I may happen to fall in with him before I reach home."

"You'll want a steady hand and a quick eye to shoot a fox



by moonlight, Mr. Franklin," said the gunsmith, as he went on loading the double-barrelled gun.

The young farmer laughed. "My hand is not often out, nor my eye either, Mr. Lemmon. Thank you," he added, as the loaded gun was handed to him; "put it down to my account, will you? I'll call and pay you some day."

"All right, Master Franklin," rejoined the smith, returning to his work at the bench; and the young farmer, throwing the gun on his shoulder, left the shop, and was soon out on the open road.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE "TRAVELLER'S REST."

FRANKLIN'S reflections, as he walked homewards, were uncommonly depressing. He had been openly insulted; he had quarrelled; he had been mixed up in a disgraceful election row; he had fought. He was not altogether ashamed of himself; for a keen sense of the provocations he had received still rankled in his breast; but, put it in what light he would, he felt himself degraded and dishonoured—the more that the prime offender had escaped chastisement, and was probably exulting in the humiliation he had inflicted.

This was not all, however. He saw ruin staring him in the face; or, if not absolute ruin, the necessity for parting with that which he would have said, and perhaps thought, was as dear to him as life itself. At any rate, the idea that his farm must be sold was maddening. And yet he could see no alternative to this course. Mr. Peake had told him some unwelcome truths, had set the matter before him in a fair light, and had virtually refused to assist him, except in his own way. And why? It

was evident enough (to William Franklin) that, in spite of his apparent openness and candour, the lawyer was playing an underhand game, as the tool of the young farmer's bitter enemy.

Indulging in these morbid feelings, and encouraging these uncharitable thoughts, the unhappy man walked on, scarcely deigning a reply to the "Good-nights" of the few foot-passengers he encountered in the gloom of evening, and scowling upon the more favoured individuals who, returning from the election on horseback or in carriages, passed him on the road. These were not many, however, for the quiet ones had long before left the scene of confusion, and the more boisterous still remained behind. In a short time, therefore, Franklin had the road to himself.

Midway between the town of H. and Franklin's farm, was a road-side public-house, of no very high repute, save that of drawing good ale. At this hostelry the young farmer had quenched his thirst in the morning, and, foot-sore and tired as he was, it is not to be wondered at that he drew up to this "Traveller's Rest," as the sign over the door purported it to be, on his return at night. At any rate, he did enter, and, throwing himself upon the settle, called for a pint of the beverage for which the house was famous.

It was considerably past nine o'clock, and the taproom of the public-house had only one remaining customer, who, seated by the fire, with a jug and glass on a table at his elbow, and pipe in his mouth, looked up as Franklin entered, and civilly spoke to him by name.

"You are late out to-night," said he.

"I may pay you the same compliment, Barton," retorted our weary traveller.

"No doubt you might; but it is more in my way than in yours to be out late, I reckon," replied the other, who was none other than the Hodge Barton mentioned in a former chapter.

"Is it?" said Franklin, drily.

"Our wives would say so, I suppose. Besides, I am nearer home than you are. Are you footing it?" continued the man.

"Yes," replied Franklin.

"Uncommon short," observed Barton, looking curiously in Franklin's face. "What's the matter, neighbour?"

"Mr. Franklin is put out with this election business, I guess," interposed the landlord, Morris, putting down the pint of fresh-drawn ale. "His side has had a rare good dressing, and that is enough to put any man out of temper."

"He might have known that there never was any chance for the blue and yellow flag," observed Barton.

"I did know that I was on the losing side, and always have been," rejoined Franklin, quietly.

"Yes, the Reds always have had the best of it in these parts," said the landlord.

"Of course they have, and will have, I dare say," continued Franklin, bitterly; he was thinking of other things besides and beyond the election, when he said this.

"Well, Reds and Yellows are all the same to me, so long as they drink my ale, and pay for it," rejoined the landlord, laughing.

"They are not to me, though," said Barton; "and if I had known as much a week ago as I do now, I would have voted for the Yellows, out of spite."

"What's up now, then, Mr. Barton?" asked the landlord.

"I have had notice to quit my farm—that's all; and I don't care who knows it," replied the farmer.

"What? Why, I thought you had got a good long lease."

"Long or short, the lease is out next Ladytide; and out I have got to go," said Barton, sullenly.

"What's that for?" asked Morris.

"You had better ask the squire, if you want to know," replied Barton.

"And if you *are* going to leave your farm, what has that to do with your voting red or yellow?" demanded Franklin.

"He would have voted yellow to spite the squire; I reckon that is what Master Barton means," explained the landlord; "and serve him right, too. I can't see, myself, what business a man has to be making his *tenants* vote his way, just because they *are* his tenants. And I always have said that the squire carries it with a pretty high hand; he likes to be master: everybody knows that."

"And so you would disown your political principles to be revenged on a man who has injured you, would you?" said Franklin, with a feeling of contempt.

"Principles! I don't care about principles. It makes precious little difference to you and me, Franklin, I guess, which side is uppermost in Parliament. But I tell you I would change my colours in double quick' time, to rile a man that has injured me, as you say. Wouldn't you, yourself, now?"

"No," said Franklin.

"What makes you always vote yellow, if it isn't to go against Squire Oakley, I should like to know?" retorted Barton.

"You would not understand if I were to tell you," replied our young farmer.

"Keep it to yourself, then," retorted the other, laughing. "But, anyhow, I don't think you'll ever be rowing in the same boat with the squire, without you make up your differences first. But perhaps that will come to pass too. And maybe," added he, as the shade of a suspicion entered his muddy brain—"maybe that's why I am warned off my farm, to make room for you, when the squire has bought your eighty acres off your hand."

The blood rose to Franklin's cheeks. For a moment or two, in the course of conversation, he had forgotten the events of the day; but now they rose up fresh in his memory, and he struck the table with such force as to make the ale-glasses ring with the concussion.

"I say, Mr. Barton, ware hawk!" exclaimed the pacific landlord. "Don't chaff the man."

"Chaff! I don't want to chaff," replied Barton; "but I don't understand Master Franklin's queer humour to-night."

"You talk about Miles Oakley buying my eighty acres," said Franklin.

"That's the common talk, anyhow," said the landlord, deprecatingly; "and I can't see that Mr. Barton was anyway to blame in repeating it. He was not to be expected to know that the subject was not agreeable; but we can change it."

"The common talk, is it?" continued Franklin. "Well, then, the next time it is the common talk here, be so good as to say that Squire Oakley and I are not on terms to be buying and selling together. Just tell them, too, that you have seen these marks that the cowardly brute has set upon me to-day"—and once more the speaker's arm was bared; and the broad traces of the heavy lash, now almost black with the coagulated blood beneath the bruised skin, were exposed to view; "say that you have seen these marks, and that the only terms on which Miles Oakley and I will ever come together is, to see how these marks are to be wiped out. And when that meeting happens, in case you should be standing by, I'll just give you a word of advice beforehand; and that is, not to try to come between us." Saying this, the young farmer, who had already risen from the settle, resumed his coat, buttoned it, threw down the money for his ale, shouldered his gun, and soon the "Traveller's Rest" was left behind him.

"What's the meaning of all this, Morris?" said the now solitary guest, as soon as Franklin had disappeared.

The landlord shook his head. "Some election row, I suppose," said he.

"If he comes across the squire while he is in this mad humour, there will be a broken head or two," remarked Barton.

"Pho! you don't suppose the squire would mind *him*."

"I don't know about the squire's minding; but Franklin isn't the man to mind the squire, anyhow," rejoined the farmer.

We need not repeat any more of this conversation. Presently Barton took his departure, and the "Traveller's Rest" soon afterwards shut itself up for the night.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HANGING WOOD.

**W**E must now follow William Franklin on his way homewards.

At about a mile from the "Traveller's Rest" the road began to be bordered on both sides by inclosed plantations of firs, beech trees, and young oaks intermingled, and inclosed by a wooden park fence. Beyond these plantations the road made a considerable *détour* before it again turned in the direction of "The Lees" farm and the village of Oakley. In former times there had been a public pathway through the plantations, and thence into a wood, known by the ominous name of Hanging Wood, from the fact of the body of a man who had some time been missing from his home, having been at last found suspended from a tree in the densest part of the wood. This was a long

while ago ; but the circumstance had connected both an ill name and a superstitious terror with the spot ; and one consequence was an almost entire avoidance of the gloomy footpath by all the neighbourhood around. Taking advantage of this state of feeling, Miles Oakley, to whom both wood and plantation belonged, had incurred no opposition in closing the road altogether, without taking the proper legal steps to attain his purpose. Thus the right of way remained, though the way itself was virtually lost to the public. More than once, it is true, William Franklin, as well as some few others, had asserted his right to pass through Hanging Wood and the squire's plantations, and in sundry squabbles with gamekeepers and others on the subject, had added another item to the causes of deep enmity between himself and Miles Oakley.

In stopping the public road, however, the squire had taken care to keep open a strictly private carriage road through his plantations, to "The Oaks," which road ran parallel, for a considerable distance, with the old footpath, though nearly a quarter of a mile intervened.

And now to return to our young farmer.

Arriving at the part of the plantation, on his left hand, where formerly had stood a high step-stile into the grounds, but which had now been superseded by the fence, Franklin for one moment hesitated. He was not wholly uninfluenced by the unpleasant recollection connected with Hanging Wood, and if he had been a little less tired, or the hour had been a trifle earlier, or the night a few shades darker, he might have proceeded quietly along the road. As it was, he gathered up resolution, and, dropping his gun on the other side of the fence, clambered over himself, and was soon pushing his way through the overgrown and disused pathway, with a bright full moon shining above to direct his steps. Three quarters of an hour more, and he would

have been safely at home ; but the adventures of that disastrous day were not yet ended.

Any reader of ours who has cultivated a habit of walking through woods and plantations by night, will be aware that the proverbial stillness of that season is liable to be every moment broken by unexpected sounds, which, if not inexplicable, are sufficiently startling. The chirping of grasshoppers, the rustling in the herbage of some disturbed animal, the whispering of the slightest breeze in the foliage overhead, the crackling of a dry rotten stick beneath the feet, the sudden rush across the path of a night-feeding beast, the rising to the wing of a frightened bird, the mournful, harsh, and piercing cry of the shriek owl, as it wheels around, and which is heard at intervals from every quarter of the heavens, and, if pools of water be near, the croaking of frogs : all this, and much besides, strikes upon the ear and thrills upon the nerves.

Franklin was not impervious to these impressions ; but he was no coward, and with the consciousness that with every step he was nearing his home, he strode on through the plantation, and, passing over a narrow strip of open grass land, plunged into the darker recesses of Hanging Wood.

But here, the old foot road seemed completely obliterated. By daylight the passenger might probably have distinguished it ; but the moon gave only a dim and uncertain guidance, obstructed as its beams were by the overhanging trees ; and in five minutes after entering the wood he had lost his way. Another ten minutes were spent in struggling through the thick underwood and brambles, which sorely tried his temper, already sufficiently disturbed by the events of the preceding day ; and then he suddenly emerged into an open glade, which he knew to be on one side of the wood, nearly adjoining to Oakley Park, and at some distance from his right and proper road.



Muttering a suppressed malediction against the wood and its owner, who had stopped the footway, and against the footway itself for having been stopped, the tired wanderer was thinking whether he should endeavour to find his way back again into it, or consummate his trespass by pushing forward into the park itself, when the moon broke out from behind a cloud, and at the same time a hare, which had been startled from its form by his approach, rose from almost beneath Franklin's feet, and scudded across the open ground. The next moment the gun was at the young farmer's shoulder; and the next, with a report which awakened the echoes of the surrounding woods, the animal lay bleeding and lifeless, some half a score yards from its slayer.

"Fool! why did you get in my way?" said Franklin, pressing forward and picking up the hare.

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## CHAPTER XII.

GOES SOME WAY TO PROVE THAT WHERE THERE IS A DISPOSITION  
FOR MISCHIEF, THE OPPORTUNITY IS NOT FAR OFF.

WE have to turn back to the town of H., and, passing over the chairing of the new member of Parliament, which was postponed in consequence of the disturbance already noted, and not suffering ourselves to be delayed by the subsequent speech of that gentleman from the balcony of the "Crown and Sceptre," we enter, for a moment or two, the red and blue committee-room, which, at nine o'clock, displayed a scene of considerable hilarity.

Surrounding a long table sat a numerous company of the principal supporters of the successful candidate, who himself

occupied the seat of honour in the assembly. The serious, legitimate business of the election had either been concluded or was deferred to another day, and instead of papers, poll-books, and other documents of a like sort, the table was spread with decanters, claret-jugs, and glasses.

The company was noisy, but harmonious enough. Elated with the victory obtained, the agents and committee-men were congratulating themselves and each other on their success; and some among them were probably contemplating with satisfaction the not distant golden harvest they should reap, as the reward of their patriotic exertions for the good of their country. Perhaps the reflection that he himself was the rich field from which this harvest was to be gathered, now and then forced itself into the mind of the honourable member; but, if so, he did not suffer it to appear.

In those "good old days" in which our story is placed, society, or a certain phase of it, may be said to have consisted of three classes, namely, the "one bottle," "two bottle," and "three bottle" men. It is not much to be wondered at, therefore, that there was a pretty constant run that night upon the wine-coolers in the adjoining apartment, a perpetual popping of corks, and that, in short, not a few of the persons then present were slightly inebriated; and also that they were thought none the worse of on that account, unless it could have been proved against them that they had succumbed to the enemy too soon.

Among those who were least affected by the wine they had taken were the squire of Oakley Park and Mr. Peake the lawyer. The latter of these two gentlemen had abstained from very frequent or deep potations from prudential motives; the former probably owed his comparative sobriety, in part at least, to strength of head; though, to do him justice, he had some long-standing prejudices in favour of sobriety, which now and

then caused him to put down his glass untasted, when it was half-way to his lips; and the prejudice had been encouraged and fostered by the wife of his choice, who liked her husband all the better for his being, as she said, brave enough to resist the temptation to which he was frequently enough exposed. On the present occasion, then, Miles Oakley, although he had somewhat exceeded his usual stint, was consequently comparatively sober.

There are many comparisons, however, which, though unrecognised by grammarians, nevertheless hold good in common experience. And the squire was in that degree of comparison which caused his countenance to assume a more ruddy hue than was altogether natural to him, and also to infuse into his heart a most genial friendliness (even for him) towards the world, his enemies included. Under these influences, therefore, his heart overflowed with sympathy for the beaten candidate and his party, and even went the length of wishing that both could have been brought in. And being reminded of the boor who "had stood up to him" a few hours before, and had given rise to the disturbance at the hustings, he declared, much to the astonishment of those who heard him, that "William Franklin was a good farmer, and a stout-hearted Englishman; that it should not be his (the squire's) fault if they were not, from that time forth, the best friends in the world; that their previous misunderstandings had been a mistake altogether; and though it would be a lowering of his own dignity to offer to atone for the indignity he believed he had put upon the young farmer, by the duello, which was sacred to gentlemen, he would do the next best thing, on the very next day, by proffering a full and ample amnesty for the past, and his countenance for all time to come. And if the farmer at 'The Lees' liked to shoot over his manor, why, he should be welcome to do it, in the face of

the world." There was nothing to be said after this ; the force of philanthropy could go no further.

"You are not going yet, squire?" exclaimed more than one voice, as the great clock at the "Crown and Sceptre" struck ten, and at its warning voice Miles Oakley rose to depart.

Miles Oakley could be firm when he liked, however ; and, making a sufficient apology for leaving the company, that he had some distance to ride, and that his Lucy would be sitting up for him, to which he added, "Bless her dear heart!" he hastily made his adieux, and, a few minutes later, the firm trot of his great charger, followed by the gentler canter of his servant's horse, resounded in the now almost empty streets and over the bridge of H. till the sounds were lost in the distance.

"I wonder whether I have been making a fool of myself, or whether I haven't," said Miles Oakley to himself, when the cool air of the autumnal night blew refreshingly upon him as he trotted along the road. And in whichever way this problem was solved, it is not to be doubted that his formal declarations of brotherhood began to give way before the common-sense remembrance of things in the every-day world around him. And he was the more reminded that it was all well, in general, to reserve friendship for true friends, when presently, after passing the "Traveller's Rest," he overtook a solitary pedestrian, whom he had no difficulty in recognising in the broad moonlight as Hodge Barton, his unprincipled tenant ; and whom he would have passed without any further notice beyond a civil nod, if he himself had not been recognised also, and addressed.

Only a few words passed between them ; but these few words were angry ones on the part of Barton, who had by this time imbibed enough of Mr. Morris's ale to make him quarrelsome and indifferent to consequences ; and scornful ones on the part

of the squire, who had no notion of being thus bearded on the highway, and by his dependant too. From that moment, therefore, for a time, his benevolence sank down to zero; and emphatically spurring his horse, he hurried onward, followed by his groom, who had heard enough of the conference to be astonished that any man should be saucy enough to address his master "like that."

Passing along the road, overshadowed by the plantations already described, the squire with his follower soon reached the high gate which opened into his private road; and a key from his servant's pocket being applied to the lock, the gate swung back, and the soft green sward of this pleasant avenue yielded beneath the horse's hoofs.

"Nearly eleven o'clock," said Miles Oakley; "but never mind, I shall soon be home now;" and he pressed on more briskly.

We have explained that the private road to "The Oaks" ran for some distance parallel with the old disused footpath. This it did till Hanging Wood was reached; then the footpath diverged to the left-hand towards the village of Oakley, while the road slightly trended to the right, and thus skirted the wood without encroaching upon it, until another gate gave admittance into the park proper. It was when about midway betwixt this gate and that slight bend in the road, that the ears of the squire were saluted by the report of a gun, which, in spite of bewildering echoes, his sportsman-like judgment told him plainly enough arose from the wood on the left. To pull up his horse so suddenly as almost to throw it back on its haunches, and involuntarily stand on his stirrups listening with eager intentness, was the work of a moment. Meanwhile, the servant rode up to his master's side.

"You heard that, Robert?" whispered the squire, hoarsely, though the inquiry was surely needless.

Yes, Robert had heard it ; and he touched his hat.

"What do you suppose it is, Robert ?"

Robert humbly opined that it was a gun.

"A gun ! you need not talk so loud, Robert : keep quiet, poor nag ! A gun ! Well, yes ! so I suppose Robert : but—by whom was the gun fired ?"

"Border and two lookers were to be about to-night in the plantations, sir ; so I heard before we came away this morning ; and may be it's them."

"Pho ! what can Border be letting off his gun at in the night ? Think again, Robert."

"It must be poachers, sir," whispered Robert, a little unnerved.

"Exactly so ; now, if we hadn't our horses, it would be an easy thing for you and me to slip into the wood and beat about till we find the rascals."

Robert was devoutly thankful that they had their horses.

"But one of us can do something." He threw himself from his horse, and tossed the bridle to Robert. "Walk the horses home, Robert, and I'll follow. No, that won't do, though, it may alarm your lady. Wait about here, and keep a sharp lookout alongside of the wood, and if anything breaks cover give chase."

"Any man, sir ?"

"Yes, man or vermin, as all poachers are. You understand ?"

"But your horse, sir ?" suggested the quaking servant.

"Tie him up to the hedge, blockhead ; and, hark you, I see you are afraid ; but if you let the rascal escape I'll never forgive you. And if Dick Border should come along, as it is likely he may, if he was in the plantation when the gun was fired, tell him he'll find me in the wood."

"Yes sir ; but ——" But the squire was gone.

The groom, who was young, and not particularly heroic, began

to quake in spirit when thus left alone on the border of a wood, which, for anything he knew, concealed not one only, but a dozen bloody-minded villains, armed, too, with instruments of slaughter. He stood his ground, however, comforting himself that he had his horse's legs to trust to, as well as his own, in case of the worst; and, that he might be prepared for emergencies, he lost no time in obeying his master's directions, by fastening the bridle of the squire's horse to a stout sapling. Then he reseated himself firmly in the saddle.

How long he waited he could not tell; it seemed to him as though an hour at least had passed away without any fresh alarm, save that which he felt accumulating upon him in his solitary watch, when faintly, as from a distance in the wood, yet distinctly, the sound of voices fell upon his ear, as though in sharp, short, and angry dispute. Then came a lull; then a concussion, as of blows stricken; then another lull; then voices, or rather a voice, raised to a shout: then the report, for the second time, of a gun; then all was still.

Discretion, we are told, is the better part of valour. The discretion of the squire's groom pointed plainly towards the park gate and stables of "The Oaks;" and he was in the act of conjuring up some fair excuse for flight, when a hand was laid upon his horse's bridle, and the familiar tones of Dick Border fell upon his ear.

"What's up, mate?"

"Is it you, Dick? I am so glad you are come," ejaculated Robert.

"What's up? I say," rejoined the gamekeeper, roughly; "I heard a shot fired when I was laying up in the plantation——"

"Two," interposed Robert.

"I didn't hear more than one, and I cut away down here. And I want to know what's *up*."

"How can I tell you? I have got enough to do to mind the horses," replied the groom.

"Horses!" said Border, looking round, and for the first time noticing the squire's horse under the hedge. "Is the master here, then?"

"He was here just now; but he would go into the wood, and left me here."

"'Tis time I was there too, then," said the gamekeeper; "if he has got beforehand with me in catching a poacher, I shall never hear the last of it;" and the next minute he had disappeared in the wood.

Half an hour passed away, and the groom, a little reassured by the knowledge that Dick Border was not far off, still maintained his post, though with fear and trembling, until, breaking from the covert, the gamekeeper was once more at his side, and so pallid, as seen in the moonlight, that Robert started with affright.

"Ride up to 'The Oaks,' and bring down as many of the men as you can: gallop for life, Robert!"

"What—what—what's the——"

"The matter? The squire has been shot, and is bleeding to death, that's all; they'll find him in Pikey's Swamp, and me with him."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### PRINCIPALLY FORENSIC.

THE preceding chapters of our narrative have been occupied by the events of a single day; but we propose now to pass over an interval of several weeks.

The winter assizes of the county had commenced, and the



town of H. was in one of its periodical phases of bustle and excitement. An unusual degree of interest was attached to this particular occasion, as a trial of some importance was expected to occupy the attention of the judge and jury, and the public at large.

As the time drew near, therefore, for the opening of the court, the entrance to the Town Hall was thronged with impatient spectators and auditors; and five minutes after the doors were opened, the entire space set apart for the public was densely crowded.

Omitting notice of the entrance of the judge, the swearing in of the jury, *grand* and *petit*, the usual proclamation against vice and so forth, and other preliminary proceedings, also of one or two cases of small importance, which, to the satisfaction of the audience, were rapidly disposed of, we come to the principal trial of the day.

A true bill having already been found by the grand jury against William Franklin, for unlawfully wounding and maliciously attempting to slay Miles Oakley, of Oakley, gentleman, etc., the prisoner was placed at the bar, and being duly arraigned and invited to plead, he, in a low tone of voice, declared himself to be Not Guilty.

Referring to certain reports of the trial, published or otherwise, we may remark that a slight sensation, amounting almost to disappointment, was experienced by some in court when it was found that the prisoner, so far from being of a very truculent and vicious and forbidding countenance, was remarkably prepossessing and intelligent in appearance, without a trace of savagery discernible in any feature. A shade of melancholy, amounting almost to an impression of grief, was, moreover, detected in his looks by some acute observers; and this, added to the pallor resulting from long and irksome confinement in an

unwholesome prison, was said to enlist in the prisoner's favour the feelings of certain ladies who were accommodated with seats on the left hand of the judge's bench. These feelings, however, appeared to subside, as one fact after another, bearing unfavourably against the prisoner at the bar, was clearly established.

The prosecution was conducted by an eminent and learned member of the bar, and the prisoner was assisted in his defence by another no less eminent and learned member of the bar.

The counsel for the prosecution opened the proceedings. He rose, he said, under the sense of a heavy weight of responsibility. It was not for him to prejudice the minds of the intelligent jury whom he had the honour of addressing, against the unhappy prisoner at the bar; nay, he desired to impress it upon the gentlemen who composed that jury, that it was their duty, as far as possible, to dismiss from their minds all thought, knowledge, or opinion of the case which they might previously have entertained, and to be guided to their verdict by the evidence which would presently come before them. At the same time he would remind them—though it was doubtless superfluous—as he would also remind himself, that they and he had a public duty to perform, paramount to all subordinate considerations, and that if it should be proved, as he had not the slightest doubt would be proved, that the prisoner at the bar had been guilty of the most malicious, the most bloodthirsty, the most inveterately-determined—ay, gentlemen—the most diabolical, outrageous, and murderous assault and attempted homicide for which he was indicted, it would be their duty to declare this conviction by their verdict, although that verdict should consign the unhappy prisoner to the heaviest penalty of the justly-offended law.

The exordium over, and the gentlemen of the jury having been propitiated, as it was intended they should be, by an appeal to their superior intelligence, the eminent and learned member

of the bar went on to give an outline of the accusations against the prisoner, as instructed by the brief he held in his hand. It would be seen, he said, and proved by witnesses whom he should presently call, that the prisoner had harboured in his mind the most undeserved but inveterate enmity against the gentleman whose life he had attempted. And with regard to that gentleman, it did not need his weak eulogiums to convince the gentlemen of the jury that his decease, under any circumstances, would have to be regarded as a public and even a national calamity, while his death by the sudden stroke of an assassin would be too horrible for the imagination to dwell upon. That stroke had been averted by a merciful Providence, and the honourable individual yet lived to be an ornament to the land in which he was a conspicuously bright example of every public and private virtue; a pattern to those of his own rank and station; a benefactor to the poor; an upholder of the glorious institutions of our country; an impartial magistrate; a true and leal friend to the loyal-hearted; a terror only to evil-doers; in short, a brilliant and shining specimen of a true English gentleman of the right stamp and noblest metal.

The intelligent and enlightened gentlemen of the jury—the learned gentleman went on to say—would readily accept his apology for being borne away by the depth and impetuosity of his feelings on this subject; for who could coldly look upon the sacrifice—the attempted assassination of—the almost accomplished murder of—a victim so conspicuous for every domestic, social, and public virtue, and not feel as a man—not speak as an Englishman? And now, having disburdened his heart, he would endeavour calmly to trace from one stage to another—from its first inception as an unreasonable and wicked dislike—an instinctive and characteristic hatred of that which is good by that which is evil and base—to the inchoate design, and

from that to the ripened action which would presently be laid before the whole court in general, and the intelligent jury in particular, in all its naked enormity. Yes, he would trace from stage to stage, and from step to step, the sentiments, the threatening words, the baffled malice of the prisoner—the unhappy prisoner at the bar, and show by witnesses most respectable, most unimpeachable, that the deed attempted was no unfortunate accident, as he was given to understand would be pleaded by the unhappy man in his defence, nor even an unpremeditated act of sudden passion in the heat of an unguarded moment, but a deep-laid plan—an act of malice afore-thought—a predetermined, base, and cowardly act of private revenge, that, but for its partial miscarriage, for which no thanks were due to the prisoner, would have plunged a bereaved family into the deepest grief, would have rendered an estimable British lady of the most exalted character a disconsolate widow, and would have deprived her infant son of an affectionate, wise, and judicious father and guardian.

The eminent and learned member of the British bar would not detain the intelligent jury whom he addressed with any further general remarks ; but would (he said) proceed briefly and succinctly to lay before them the nature of the fact hereafter to be proved.

It would be shown, he continued, that the accused, who, he might be permitted to observe, was a small farmer occupying land nominally his own, in the vicinity of the noble estate and residence of the prosecutor, had at various times been unfortunately brought, or rather, had brought himself, into unpleasant collision with that gentleman, by his pertinacious infringement of the game laws, and by repeated trespasses upon the prosecutor's land, woods, and plantations ; and he might remark that great forbearance had been exercised towards him in relation to

these illegal acts. This forbearance, however, so far from softening the unhappy man's violent and unrestrained passions, had only encouraged him to proceed to greater lengths of perverse opposition; and it would be proved by a witness whom he should presently call, that only on the morning of the day of the attempted murder, he uttered no very obscure threats against the prosecutor, which might have passed unheeded and remained forgotten, but for the succeeding events, which fully explained their import.

"Well, on the morning of that day, gentlemen," the learned advocate went on, "the prisoner announced his intention of visiting this town. I should explain that it was at the time of the late election of a member for the county, and that the prisoner, as a freeholder, though on a small scale, had a vote. It was on the last day of election; and it is necessary for me to impress upon your minds that the prisoner, in his capacity of a freeholder, had already given his vote, and that his presence was not in the slightest degree required in this town on that particular day. But he came hither, gentlemen, and, as I am given to understand, against the express wishes, and I may say commands, of a venerable parent—a very respectable personage for her station, I have no doubt—who advised her self-willed son to stay at home, and attend to his own proper business. Well would it have been, gentlemen, for that son had he obeyed his mother's injunctions; but '*quem Deus vult perdere*'—I need not continue the quotation, gentlemen; your classical minds will supply the rest." And hereupon the gentlemen of the jury looked at one another and nodded.

The barrister then proceeded to follow the accused through the events of the day in question; but as these have already been placed before the reader, a brief summary of the remainder of his address will suffice.

He intended, then, to show (he said) that early in the day, on first entering the town, the prisoner, unable, as it seemed, to curb the passions which animated him, made a savage and unprovoked assault upon the prosecutor, which necessitated a certain degree of gentle violence on that gentleman's part, in escaping from the furious attack. Next he should show, by the evidence of a professional gentleman of the highest respectability, the animus of the prisoner towards the unoffending individual whom he had singled out for private revenge. Next, he should prove the threatening language and gestures indulged in by the accused, towards that same individual, while heading an election mob on the afternoon of the same day. He should then follow the miserable man to the shop of a respectable mechanic, an artificer—a gunsmith, in fact, where he provided himself with the weapon with which the murderous deed was attempted, and where also he either accidentally or intentionally, as no longer needing *that* instrument of violence, left behind him a bludgeon which had been seen in his hands through the whole of the former part of the day, and which, as the advocate had been given to understand, he had wielded with savage fury in the election fight, which had already, doubtless, become a part of the history of that ancient and respectable town.

It might be said, and the jury would probably be told by the prisoner, that the weapon procured of the gunsmith—which was none other than a double-barrelled gun, which would be exhibited in court as a silent but eloquent witness of the prisoner's evil intent—that that weapon was the unhappy man's own property, and had been in former times used by him in the comparatively harmless occupation of sporting; that it had been sent to the gunsmith to be repaired, and that, the repairs having been completed, it was natural for the owner to reclaim it.

"Gentlemen," said the impassioned speaker, "by all means

let the prisoner have the benefit of this favourable circumstance—if it be indeed a favourable circumstance. And far be it from me, gentlemen, to utter a single word against the manly, the necessary, the sacred exercise of field sports, when followed by properly authorised and duly certificated individuals. But, gentlemen, here is the melancholy fact—the prisoner was *not* a properly authorised and duly certificated person. Therefore, in putting that weapon to its legitimate purpose—bear in mind that he was committing an offence—yes, committing an offence, gentlemen, against that admirable, and noble, and sacred palladium of British liberty, the law for the preservation of game. Gentlemen, by the very possession of that weapon, the prisoner stands before you confessedly A POACHER; a poacher, gentlemen; a character the most despicable, mischievous, and illegal.

“But, gentlemen, leaving this, I have to place before you what will presently be proved on oath, that the proceedings of the miserable man at this juncture, and the words he let drop on the occasion of his providing himself with the murderous weapon, are conclusive to the point that he had already marked out for himself the perpetration of that horrible crime with which he stands charged. He procures the gun to be loaded, gentlemen—to be loaded at that time of night, when it was already dusk, on the feeble pretext that it would be ready for him in the morning. Gentlemen, I appeal to you—sportsmen, as some, if not all of you, doubtless are—legally qualified sportsmen, gentlemen—I appeal to your experience, whether you ever loaded a gun overnight, that it might be ready for the morning? Gentlemen, in my younger days, when the manly and bucolic art of shooting had its charms for me, it was my habit, invariably, to discharge my gun on my return from the pursuit of game, if it happened to be then loaded, in order to avert accidents which might otherwise have happened. But,

gentlemen, the prisoner procured his gun to be loaded at night, that it might be ready for him in the morning. An unheard-of and monstrous idea!

"But, then, mark what follows. Immediately contradicting himself, and thus exemplifying the axiom, that certain characters have need of good memories, the unhappy man—as will be proved in evidence—requested the gunsmith to charge the gun with No. 1 shot—with No. 1, gentlemen; alleging as a reason for this extraordinary proceeding, that he might, perchance, get a shot at a *troublesome fox* before reaching home. A troublesome fox! Gentlemen, I leave you to form your own judgment respecting these remarkable words."

The eminent and learned barrister then in a few words traced the course of the prisoner through the remainder of that night, to the "Travellers' Rest," and thence to the place where the deed was done, leaving it to be inferred that, having concealed himself amidst the umbrageous foliage of that secluded and evil-omened spot, which he knew to be near to the road by which his intended victim would return to his home, he listened for the sounds of the horses' hoofs, and then discharged one of the barrels of his gun, in order to draw that individual into the recesses of the wood; that in this deep-laid scheme he succeeded, as would be shown; and that then a conflict took place, in which—happily for society, and providentially for the object of his malice—he was but partially successful.

The learned advocate then repeated his assurance that, if he should prove what it was laid upon him, in the sacred interests of the safety and security of the British nation, and with due regard to the first principles of human justice, to prove in that court, the intelligent jury whom he addressed would feel it incumbent on them not to let loose again upon society so hardened a criminal. And thereupon he sat down.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## WHAT THE WITNESSES SAID.

THE examination of witnesses now commenced. It is not our intention to inflict upon the reader a full and minute report of the further proceedings of this trial. It is the less necessary to our story, as previous chapters have already pretty distinctly marked out the course of events on the last day of the election, and also as the speech of the learned counsel furnishes a clue to the evidence which he intended to place before the court.

It is sufficient to say, therefore, that the first witnesses called were certain neighbours of William Franklin, who had at sundry times heard him utter very intelligible sentiments respecting men of large property in general, and Miles Oakley in particular; also that he had quoted with approbation the conduct of the people in France, during the late Revolution there, in violently ridding the land of aristocrats, averring that sharp diseases required sharp remedies.

This evidence was objected to by the prisoner's counsel, as not bearing on the case before the court; but it was ruled by the judge that it was admissible and important, as showing the animus of the prisoner at the bar.

The next witness called was Martha White. It was evident that she entered the witness-box with great reluctance; and after casting a piteous look at her young master, as she repeatedly termed the prisoner, she broke out into sobs and tears. The whole of her evidence was unwillingly given, and had to be painfully extracted from her. She had meant no harm, she said, when she repeated to Tom, one of the men on the farm, what her young master had said at the breakfast-table; and she

wished there had been a blister on her tongue rather than she should have repeated it. Neither did she believe her master meant any harm; she was sure he did not: it was only his way of talking when he was a little vexed.

The cross-examination of this witness elicited that the prisoner was a man of a mild and generous disposition, who never intentionally did harm to any one. And when the gentlemen of the long robe had done with her, and before she left the witness-box, she once more raised her eyes to the prisoner, and besought his forgiveness in passionate tones, for having said a word that could be turned and twisted against him.

The next witness was a gentleman who was one of the company of horsemen on the bridge, when the unfortunate rencontre took place between the prosecutor and the prisoner. It appeared that he observed the sudden seizure by Franklin, of Mr. Oakley's bridle, without being aware of any cause of provocation, and that his opinion at the time, and afterwards, was that the man was either mad or drunk.

In cross-examination, this gentleman admitted that there might have been such provocation, though he did not see it; and that, if any person were to ride against him (the witness), with the apparent intention of insulting him, he should probably attempt to stop that person and demand an explanation or apology. Being further questioned, he also admitted that the strokes given by the prosecutor with his riding-whip were pretty hard ones; but they were stricken in self-defence, or from an instinct of self-preservation; and he should have done the same thing had he been thus attacked.

Following this witness, Mr. Peake, being called, entered the witness-box. His testimony told considerably against the prisoner; for though in cross-examination he spoke favourably of Franklin, as far as his former knowledge of him was

concerned, he positively swore to certain strong expressions used by the prisoner in reference to the prosecutor, which plainly indicated malice, and from which a design of revenge might be inferred. And what further added to this unfavourable impression was the evidence he gave respecting the prosecutor's kindly intentions towards Franklin; because this tended to prove that the attack in the wood could not have been provoked by any intemperance of feeling or action on the part of the prosecutor.

The evidence of the next two or three succeeding witnesses bore upon the demeanour and violent words of the prisoner in the market-place, in front of the hustings.

Benjamin Lemmon, on being placed in the witness-box, testified to the loading of the gun, and the words used by the prisoner on that occasion. On being interrogated by the counsel for the defence, he declared that there was nothing suspicious, so far as he could see, in any man loading his gun overnight, if he chose to do so; that No. 1 shot was a size often used by sportsmen, and was the shot any one would use who contemplated shooting a fox or other such animal. On being further interrogated, he declared that he understood the words of Franklin in relation to the "troublesome fox," in a literal and natural, and not in a figurative and non-natural sense. Foxes were troublesome to farmers, as everybody must know.

At this stage of the proceedings the gun was produced in court, and handed to the jury for inspection. The mode in which they examined it provoked a smile from some of the spectators, which was expanded to a broad grin when the learned judge, with a look of unutterable disgust, and pointing to the weapon, said hastily, "Take it away; take it away."

"It is not loaded, my lord," said the counsel.

"What of that? May go off, loaded or not loaded," said his lordship: and thereupon the dangerous weapon was removed.

The next witnesses in succession were Morris, the landlord of the "Travellers' Rest," and Hodge Barton, neither of whom added much to the preceding evidence. According to the report already referred to, they were both in favour of the prisoner, though compelled to appear against him; so much so, that the perverse answers of Barton to the questions put by the counsel called forth the severe rebuke of the judge, who declared he was half-minded to commit the witness for contempt of court. But he didn't.

Robert Greyson was next sworn, and, on being questioned, deposed to hearing two several reports of a gun in Hanging Wood; also to the time of the occurrence; also to being left alone by his master, and to being hastily sent by Border, the gamekeeper, to procure help from "The Oaks." He knew nothing more.

Richard Border, following the preceding witness, declared that being on the look-out in the Oakley plantations, about eleven o'clock on the night in question, he heard the report of a gun, which he judged to have been fired in Hanging Wood; that, hastening to the Wood, and being guided to the spot by noises in the underwood, which indicated that some person was hastily pushing through it, he came suddenly upon a part of the wood called "Pikey's Swamp." The moon was shining brightly, and by its light he saw with horror his master, the prosecutor, stretched on the ground. On trying to raise him, he perceived that he was insensible, and that blood was freely flowing from a wound in or near to the shoulder. Without waiting to examine further, or to pursue the retreating man, whoever it might be, he hastened back to the skirt of the wood, and despatched the witness Greyson for assistance. This soon arriving, the wounded gentleman was conveyed to his house, and a messenger was sent off at once for surgical assistance.

The counsel for the defence having declined to cross-examine this witness, another was about to be called, when the judge remarked that it evidently would be impossible to bring the trial to a conclusion on that day, as it was already late. He directed, therefore, that the jury should be secluded and properly accommodated till the morning. The prisoner was then removed, and the court broke up.

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## CHAPTER XV.

THE SECOND DAY OF THE TRIAL—WHAT OTHER WITNESSES SAID.

ON the second day of William Franklin's trial, the court was even more densely crowded than on the preceding ; and the interest was augmented by the appearance of the prosecutor, Miles Oakley, who, soon after the reopening of the court, entered by one of the private doors, and took his seat on the magistrates' bench, at the right hand of the judge. He was slightly pale, as from recent illness, and his left arm was supported by a sling ; otherwise, his appearance tallied with the description already given of him.

Another person was in the court on this day, whose concern in the issue of the trial was even greater than that of the prosecutor, although attracting far less notice. A few pitying glances were nevertheless bestowed upon the young woman who was pointed out as the wife of the prisoner, and who, by the kindness of the attorney employed in the defence, and the attention of an officer of the court, was accommodated with a seat near to the witness-box, and not far from the prisoner, with whom, however, she was not permitted to hold any intercourse, saving

THE SQUIRE IS FOUND IN THE PRESERVE WOUNDED.





that of an unutterable look of affection, which drew tears from other eyes than his. She was neatly and modestly attired.

Before the proceedings of the court were opened, conjectures were freely hazarded by the spectators as to the result of the trial. On one point all were agreed, namely, that there was not a chance of the prisoner's acquittal: the uncertainty was as to the sentence; and we regret to say that bets were freely offered and taken, that the sentence would be death.\*

While these conjectures were still busy, an usher shouted "Silence in the court;" and the trial was resumed by a call for the remaining witnesses.

Frederick Harman was the first called; and, on being sworn, gave evidence to the following effect:—

He was a surgeon, residing at P., a village about three miles from Oakley. He remembered the night of the —th of ——. On that night, it being about twelve o'clock, he was roused by the violent ringing of his night-bell, and was hastily summoned to "The Oaks." Arriving there, he found the prosecutor suffering from a gun-shot wound, and in a fainting fit, from loss of blood. The witness then proceeded to describe the nature of the wound; stating that the muscles of the shoulder and neck were considerably torn by the shot; that the left clavicle and shoulder-bone were injured; and that, to the best of his belief, if the gun had not been discharged obliquely, or if it had been pointed an inch higher or lower or to the right, the wound would have been instantly fatal. Having further described the treatment he adopted, and the process of restoration, he stated that, in the sloughing of the wound, several large shots were

\* It is scarcely necessary to do more than remind our readers that, in the times of which we are writing death punishments were not confined to cases of wilful murder or high treason, as they now are.



self-discharged from it, which he had preserved, and which he now presented in court. Saying this, he produced a pill-box, containing the leaden missiles. And the witness Lemmon being presently recalled, he declared that to the best of his belief and knowledge they were No. 1 shots; but whether they were some of the identical shots with which he loaded the prisoner's gun, he could not swear.

The next witness called was Martin Prosser, who described himself as, professionally, a cordwainer, and officially, the constable of Oakley. All the evidence he could give, was that he obtained possession of the prisoner's gun, which he found in the kitchen of "The Lees" farm, and which had the appearance of having been recently discharged; also, that on searching Hanging Wood, near to Pikey's Swamp, he picked up a dead hare, which had evidently been recently shot; also, that he assisted in taking the prisoner into custody, on the authority of Mr. Anthony Melburn, a neighbouring magistrate. No cross-examination of this witness was deemed necessary by the prisoner's counsel, and

Anthony Melburn, gentleman, and one of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the county, was next sworn. His evidence was important, and was principally in the form of a statement made voluntarily by the prisoner himself, and taken down at the time by his (the magistrate's) clerk. This statement, or confession, was read in court. First of all, however, this witness said, that early on the morning of the —th day of —, he was informed that William Franklin, the prisoner, was in his servants' hall, and begged for an immediate interview on a matter of moment. Having some slight knowledge of Franklin, and further stimulated by a remark of his servant, that the young farmer seemed greatly agitated, he (the witness) hastily threw on his clothes and proceeded to his library, into

which room he had previously directed the applicant to be shown.

The prisoner then, being in great perturbation of mind, made declaration that he had accidentally shot Miles Oakley, of "The Oaks;" and was proceeding to state the particulars of the accident, when the witness stopped the prisoner to ask whether he desired to make a statement to him as a magistrate; and the reply was that he did. The witness stated that he then suggested that the prisoner should take further time for reflection, as everything he confessed would hereafter be brought forward as evidence. The prisoner consented to this, and was left alone in witness's library.

Mr. Melburn further stated, that his motive for proposing this delay was threefold. First, that he himself might ascertain whether the shocking information brought to him was true, or whether it might not arise from aberration of mind or overheated imagination in the prisoner. Next, that the prisoner might not, in the first emotions of remorse, say what he would afterwards wish to have remained unspoken. And last, that he might obtain the assistance of his clerk in taking down the prisoner's statement in due form. That, accordingly, he sent off a servant, first to "The Oaks," to make due inquiries, and then to his clerk, to demand his immediate attendance. Before the hour had expired, the servant had returned with the afflictive tidings that Mr. Oakley had been dangerously wounded on the preceding night, in Hanging Wood, by some person then unknown, as the surgeon had declared the patient to be yet unable to answer coherently any questions put to him. Following the servant came the clerk; and the given hour soon after expiring, the prisoner's confession or statement was taken down from his lips. It was then read by the clerk of the court, and was to this effect:—

That, returning from H. on the night in question, he, the prisoner, took the old footpath through Oakley new plantations and Hanging Wood, as being his direct road homewards; that he had with him a double-barrelled gun, which had been repaired, and that it happened to be loaded. The prisoner further declared that he had no design in having the gun loaded; it happened so. He could not account for the circumstance which had produced such calamitous results; and he would say no more.

The prisoner then went on to say that, on reaching Hanging Wood, he lost his way, owing to the path being overgrown and almost obliterated; and that, after wandering some time in search of the path, he found himself at that part of the wood known as Pikey's Swamp. That, at this juncture, he unfortunately started a hare, which was plainly visible by the light of the moon, and that, in the impulse of the moment, and without thought of consequences, he raised his gun and shot it.

The prisoner then stated that while engaged in securing the hare thus shot, preparatory to carrying it home—as he conceived he had a right to do, morally though not legally, for the animal had probably been fattened on his lands; well, while thus engaged, the squire broke in upon him from the wood, and collared him. He was not in a mood, Franklin acknowledged, to be handled by any man, and least of all by Mr. Oakley, from whom he had already received injury and insult enough for one day; and he struggled to get free. Succeeding in this, after some violent wrestling and a good many angry words, he secured his gun, and warned the squire to stand off; telling him that if he had anything to say to him, his antagonist would know where to find him in the morning. But it seemed ~~that~~ Mr. Oakley's blood was up, as his own was too, on account of what had passed between them before, and he ordered the

prisoner to give up his gun, calling him an ill-conditioned poacher, and other names. And on his refusal to do this, the squire rushed upon him again, and endeavoured to wrest the gun from his hands. Then another desperate struggle took place—the squire also shouting out for his gamekeeper, Border; when, by some means, in the scuffle, the trigger of the gun got entangled in the brushwood, the remaining barrel exploded, and Mr. Oakley fell to the ground.

Franklin then declared that, alarmed at what had happened, he knelt over the wounded man, with the intention of ascertaining the extent of the mischief, when he heard the sound of some one else approaching; and as the consequences of being found in the wood under such circumstances came into his mind, he was seized with sudden terror (for which he afterwards bitterly reproached himself), and took to flight, taking his gun with him.

The prisoner concluded his statement by saying that, after a sleepless night, and as calmly as possible reviewing in his mind what had transpired, and filled also with remorse for having, though accidentally, shed human blood, and perhaps killed a man, he determined to give himself up to abide the consequences of his deed.

This statement having been read, the witness, Mr. Melburn, replied with great frankness to a few questions put by the counsel for the defence; and emphatically declared that there was such an air of truthfulness in Franklin while telling his story, and it seemed to him so entirely probable, that he had no hesitation in giving it his firm credence, especially as he knew Franklin to be a man of honest integrity; and that it was with great reluctance that he felt it his duty, notwithstanding, to give him into custody and commit him, on his own self-accusations, to the county jail.

Mr. Melburn was then about to retire, when the counsel for

the prosecution, after a hasty conference with the solicitor by whom he had been instructed, again rose, and begged to ask the witness whether he were on good terms with his brother magistrate, the prosecutor.

"I am not on bad terms with Mr. Oakley," he answered.

"Not on bad terms ; but there have been differences of opinion which have led to a kind of estrangement: do I understand this, Mr. Melburn ?"

"We have differed in politics, and have opposed each other in a gentlemanly way. I presume this is what you refer to, though I do not see what bearing this has upon the present case," replied the witness, rather warmly.

"Not much, probably," retorted the counsel, quietly ; "but, leaving this, I have one more question to ask—Were you not in close correspondence with the prisoner at the bar during the last election ?"

Hereupon the counsel for the prisoner rose in some warmth, and protested against such questions being put, and the judge ruled that the question need not be answered. So the counsel for the prosecution sat down.

But the counsel for the prisoner, being on his legs, desired to supplement his cross-examination by another question, namely, whether, to the witness's true knowledge and belief the old foot-path through Hanging Wood had ever been legally stopped. To this the witness replied that it never had been legally stopped ; and that the prisoner, or any other man, had as great a right to use it, by night or by day, as to walk on the turnpike road.

The witness was then permitted to leave the box.

Miles Oakley was then called, and, descending from his seat of eminence, was duly sworn.

According to the report of the trial, this gentleman gave his evidence with great perspicuity and candour. In the main, his

account of what transpired in the wood tallied with that given by the prisoner in his voluntary statement, until he came to the final struggle, in the course of which he distinctly remembered hearing the prisoner say, "If you do not take your hands off me, I'll shoot you." These were the last words he then heard; and he knew nothing more till he found himself on his bed, attended by the surgeon.

"On your oath, Mr. Oakley," said the counsel for the defence, presently, "will you dare affirm that the discharge of the gun was not accidental?"

"I cannot think it was merely accidental," said the witness, after a moment's hesitation.

"You believe it to have been intentional, Mr. Oakley?" demanded the counsel for the prosecution.

Another pause; and then the answer, "I do."

Here the evidence for the prosecution was closed, and the prisoner was called on for his defence.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### WHAT THE PRISONER SAID IN HIS OWN DEFENCE.

IN the good old times of which we are telling, it was a curious anomaly in English jurisprudence that counsel was admissible in the argument of fact to the jury only in the highest and lowest offences: in treason, by the express provision of statute; and in mere misdemeanors, by the common law. In all capital cases, except treason, the accused was denied this privilege. When, therefore, William Franklin was called upon to rebut (if he could) the accusation under which he laboured,

a necessity was laid upon him to speak in his own defence, if he had any defence to make.

For a moment or two the unfortunate man appeared bewildered, and the struggle to overcome his embarrassment, arising from the novelty and the perils of his position, was painful to behold. Encouraged, however, by a look from his counsel and by a few words, kindly enough spoken, from the judge, he began, in a low tone at first, but gathering boldness as he went on :—

“My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I have very little to say beyond what I said in my voluntary statement to the magistrate, and which was faithfully taken down, and has now been read in this court. I don’t mean to try to contradict the evidence which has been given against me these two days by any of the witnesses, except the last; and all I have to say about that is, that I hope God will forgive Mr. Oakley if he has said what is not true knowingly. My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, what that witness has said is not true. I never threatened to shoot him; I never thought of such a thing. I might have said, when he was trying to take my gun from me, that if he did not take care he would get shot, for one barrel was loaded; but I did not say this as a threatening, but only as a caution. My lord and gentlemen, the discharge of the gun was as much an accident as anything that ever happened; and nobody could be more sorry for it than I was; though my blood was up: I allow that.

“My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I say again I don’t find any fault—not much, leastways, with what most of the witnesses have said against me. Pretty nearly everything they have said is true enough, no doubt, only that it was drawn out in such a way as to do me most damage. No doubt I did say some things on that most unfortunate day that I ought not to have said;

but, my lord, I had been injured by the squire—I mean by Mr. Oakley, in more ways than one. I have been advised, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury, not to say anything about what provocations I had received, because that would tell against me, as showing that I had been worked up to malice and revenge. But, my lord, and gentlemen, I have always found that plain, straightforward truth is best; and I say now that I had been insulted that day, and so had been provoked, as any of you gentlemen would have been; and if I could have fought it out in a fair stand-up fight, as I said at the ‘Travellers’ Rest,’ I would have gladly done it, however much above me Mr. Oakley may think himself to be. But as to laying up to shoot the man, or meaning to kill him when we did get into a skirmish, I had no thought of it; and I declare again, solemnly, that the gun went off accidentally.

“My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I am in an unhappy position. I plainly enough see that the evidence against me is very strong—stronger than I thought it would have been; and I have nothing to set against that evidence besides my own fair character, which will be presently spoken to by a few witnesses who have been so kind as to offer to come here to-day on my behalf, and my own assertion that I never meant to do what I am accused of. If you, gentlemen, can bring yourselves to believe my statement and my witnesses, I hope you will acquit me. If not, I put myself in the hands of the Almighty and All-seeing Judge to make my innocence appear in His own good time.

“My lord, and gentlemen, something has been said by some of the witnesses about my political sentiments, as if they had led me to the commission of murder. I don’t deny holding such sentiments; and they may be wrong, though I don’t think them so. But, my lord, you have it in your power to tell the



gentlemen of the jury that there are numbers of great men and wise men, and even noblemen, in the country who have the same thoughts. My lord, I don't think that anybody will have the face to say that these men are capable of committing wilful murder because they hold such opinions.

"And now, my lord, and gentlemen, I have said pretty near all that I meant to say. There is only one thing more—it is this: If you are pleased to acquit me of the evil design with which I am charged, I shall be thankful for that act of justice—for justice it will be; but your verdict will not give me back what I have lost. My lord, anyway, I stand here, and shall go from this place, a ruined man. Since I have been in prison, my creditors have put in their claims—my property, such as it was, has passed away from me in due course of law, and I had not the power to help it. I shall have no home to return to: and—what is the bitterest thought of all—along with me, my mother, my wife, and my child are reduced to poverty——" Here the prisoner was so much affected as to be unable to proceed; and, after casting an agitated look around him at his weeping wife, he abruptly and in broken language closed his address by saying that he cast himself upon the mercy of God and the justice of his earthly judges.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE VERDICT, AND WHAT THE JUDGE SAID AFTERWARDS.

MUCH emotion was excited in the court by the prisoner's address; and opinions slightly wavered as to the result of the trial. It was just possible that the jury might take a merciful view of the case, and hesitate to pronounce a verdict

which would consign the prisoner to ignominy for a crime of which, after all, there was a bare possibility that he might be innocent. Meanwhile, several witnesses were called on his behalf; but as their testimony bore almost entirely on the previous good character of the accused, and did not contradict or invalidate the evidence against him, it is not needful to report it. The case for the defence was now closed, and the judge commenced his summing up.

He commenced by reviewing, with great perspicuity, the evidence of the several witnesses; fairly placing before the jury a few circumstances which bore favourably for the prisoner, and, on the other hand, commenting strongly on the testimony of the witnesses for the prosecution, with an intimation that, if these were to be believed, he did not see how the conclusion of the prisoner's guilt could be avoided; but that, if any doubt presented itself to their minds, the prisoner was entitled to the benefit of that doubt. Before the learned judge had concluded his address, the transitory impression made by the prisoner's defence had faded away from the minds of the audience; and no surprise was felt when, after a brief conference, and without retiring to consider their verdict, the foreman of the jury intimated that he and his brethren were agreed, and that the prisoner was "Guilty."

A piercing cry from the wife of the prisoner broke the momentary silence which followed this announcement, as, rising from the seat with which she had been accommodated, she stretched out her arms towards the prisoner's dock, and attempted to reach him, as he quickly turned when her mournful plaint fell upon his ear. But her strength of endurance, so long kept upon the rack, now failed; and falling back into the arms of one of the officers, she was conveyed from the court insensible.

The slight confusion arising from this painful incident having subsided, the last scene in the judicial drama was enacted.

"Prisoner at the bar," said the judge, addressing Franklin ; "after a long, and patient, and impartial trial, you have been convicted by a jury of your own countrymen of the crime of a wilful attempt at murder. In that verdict I entirely concur, and consider it altogether satisfactory. The case, as the jury have viewed it, and as I have viewed it, and as all who have witnessed the proceedings of this court of judicature have viewed it, must be considered as attended by circumstances of much aggravation. Incited by violent passions, which were influenced, probably, by fancied wrongs, and increased in virulence by envy of the prosperity of another, you rose early in the morning of a certain day, with a fixed determination to wreak your insane vengeance on an unsuspecting person, and one who, as has appeared in evidence, had the most friendly and benevolent feelings towards you. It adds to the flagrancy of your crime that this person was your near neighbour, and one whose eminent virtues must have been well known to you and witnessed by you, while they endeared him to all—to all, save to your most unhappy self. Through that livelong day—without remorse, and without mitigation of rancour—without flinching from your design, you followed that person, sought again and again to fix a quarrel upon him, and at length, under the veil of night, and shrouded in the gloom of a lonely wood, you perpetrated the deed which has brought upon you its merited consequences, and, but for the interposition of a merciful Providence, would have plunged a whole neighbourhood into the deepest sorrow. You have pleaded misadventure, and that, in the face of the clearest proofs of deliberate design. Even that plea, could it have been entertained, would have been of little avail in your case, as you were committing a trespass with an illegal design, as is clearly proved by the first shot you

fired. But had that plea been entertained, and could it have rescued you from punishment, no man's life would be safe. Deeds such as that contemplated by you are in general committed in privacy and darkness, when there is no eye, save that of Omniscience, to witness them: and every murderer might plead misadventure. The law has wisely provided against this, and assumes that every death by violence is wilful murder, except when the contrary is clearly proved.

"It is not for me to aggravate the sufferings of your mind. You must be more hardened than I believe you to be, not to feel acutely your own wretched position, as well as the ruin and degradation of those near and dear to you; and I will only say that you have brought those evils upon them and yourself, and must bear the bitter reflection that you are their destroyer and your own.

"You have appealed to me in vindication of those sentiments and principles ascribed to you, and avowed by you; and, in reply to that appeal, I admit that many who hold such sentiments, and make their boast of such principles, would shrink with natural horror from the extreme results to which they lead; but, in your case, it seems manifest that, acting upon an impetuous temper and an ill-regulated mind, those principles first of all sapped away the proper respect demanded from the class to which you belong towards the higher classes of society, and prepared you for the darkest crimes and most daring attempts against order, morality, and virtue.

"It now only remains for me to pass the sentence of the law, which is, that you be transported beyond the seas for the term of twenty years."

It was remarked that during this address the prisoner appeared to labour under very strong emotions, and once or twice to be on the point of interrupting the learned judge. He

restrained himself, however, and at the close of the proceedings was immediately removed from the dock.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER THE TRIAL—"A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED :"  
AND "CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES."

WHEN Letty Franklin recovered from her death-like swoon, she found herself in the courtyard of the County Hall, on the cold frosty ground, her head leaning against the bosom of Martha White, her old servant, who was seated by her side, and weeping plentifully, while applying the restoratives which, with the keen winter's atmosphere, had brought back consciousness—that miserable consciousness of some overwhelming, crushing calamity, which sometimes, on first waking, takes the place of distinct remembrance.

"What is it, Martha? What has happened? Where am I?" faintly cried the sufferer, endeavouring to rise, but falling back again into the arms of her supporter, and looking fearfully on the group of spectators gathered around.

"Don't ask me now," sobbed Martha, soothingly, as a gentle nurse would speak to a sorrowing child: "you shall know all by-and-by, mistress dear; but if we could only get away from here now."

Among the spectators was one who had already rendered Martha some assistance. He was a young man, of gentlemanly exterior, and the bystanders, who knew him, had quietly obeyed when he begged of them to stand farther away, and not crowd round the unhappy woman, who wanted air to breathe, and plenty of it. He now interposed again.

"You are quite right," he said; "this is not the place for any kind of explanations; the poor creature must be removed as speedily as possible. She cannot walk, however. Where is her home?"

Another of the crowd drew the young gentleman aside, and whispered a few words in his ear. In a moment he was again at Martha's side.

"I understand it now," he whispered; "are you and your mistress lodging in H.?"

The old servant answered in the affirmative.

"Very well: my chaise is in the street; you must help to get the young woman into it, and my servant shall drive you both straight to your lodgings."

"You are very good, sir," said Martha, turning and casting a scrutinising glance at the Good Samaritan; "but——"

"But you don't know who I am. Well, that does not signify, does it? If you are very scrupulous, however, these people around will tell you that I am a doctor. They know me."

"It is not that, sir," replied Martha, whose examination of the young man's countenance had probably satisfied her first scruples; "but it is a very poor place we are lodging at, sir."

"What does that matter? Any place is better than this; and—see, the young person is nearly fainting again—this is a more serious case than I thought it to be. Quick, help her across the yard into the street; and you, good fellows, lend a hand." He said this to a couple of stout townsmen who were looking on.

"All right, doctor; we'll do anything you tell us, sir," said one of the men; and with their assistance Letty and her servant were conveyed to the chaise, which drove off with its double load, the young surgeon following on foot.

It was quite true that the unhappy young farmer's wife was again relapsing into insensibility; so that, on arriving at the

temporary lodgings she had secured for herself and Martha, in a wretched, poverty-stricken by-street in H., over a huxster's shop, she had to be lifted out of the vehicle, and borne to her chamber. It was well that medical aid was at hand, and promptly applied; for the courage and bravery and affection which had so long sustained Letty, to the fatal moment which sealed her husband's doom, had then given way; and the dreamy lethargy which succeeded her first swoon was followed by hysterics so violent and long-continued, that even the benevolent young doctor became alarmed. Eventually these subsided, however, and the gentleman deemed it safe to take his departure, but not without strictly enjoining Martha to send for him immediately on any recurrence of the dangerous symptoms he had succeeded in partially allaying.

"But where am I to send, sir?" inquired the attendant.

"True, I had forgotten that you do not know me, and are, as you have told me, a stranger in the town. My name is Haydon; and I live—stay, here is my address"—and he put his card into Martha's hand. "Be sure you send for me," he added; "and if I do not hear from you, I shall look in again early to-morrow; and in the meantime—" here the doctor whispered certain instructions in Martha's ear.

"You are very kind, sir," said the old servant hesitatingly; "but my poor young mistress——"

"Is your poor young mistress. I can understand: I heard what her husband said in court: I was there. But don't say anything about that. And you need not be afraid of a doctor's bill." And so he departed.

Uneasily lying on a hard and comfortless couch in that darkened chamber, and with none to speak a word of hope or resignation in her ears, poor Letty moaned and wept till she had no more tears to shed; and then, as the sense of her misery

returned and pressed upon her brain, she relapsed from time to time into wild and incoherent cries. Let us draw a veil over this sad scene, however.

Not many words are needed to explain the position of affairs in relation to "The Lees" farm. In the interval between the incarceration of William Franklin and his trial, processes had been issued by his creditors, of whom the mortgagee was the principal; and the sale by auction of the little estate had been determined on and announced, while a sheriff's officer had taken possession of the property. The distressed wife and mother of the young farmer were indeed permitted on sufferance to remain in the farmhouse, but in a few weeks at furthest they would have to find another refuge; while the scanty resources at their command, or such funds as they could raise, had been nearly exhausted in the steps taken for the prisoner's defence. It is true, all that had taken place had been done in due course of law; there had been no hurry nor vindictiveness nor masterful oppression of the weak by the strong. But it was not the less true that the prosecution of Franklin in the Criminal Court of Judicature (even if that had terminated in an acquittal) had brought about his ruin by civil law.

As the time for the prisoner's trial drew near, his wife expressed her determination to be present; nor could she be moved from this determination, even by the entreaties of her husband. On the preceding day, therefore, she had taken leave of her mourning mother-in-law and her little Willy, and, attended by her faithful Martha, had proceeded to H., and taken the temporary lodgings in which our present chapter finds her. Wretched as those lodgings were, they were the best she could procure with her almost empty purse; and besides, it mattered little, she said, how hardly she lodged, while her William had yet harder lodgings in prison.



Several hours passed away; the short winter's day closed; the streets of H., unlighted save by here and there a dim oil lamp which only served to make darkness visible, were almost deserted, when the door of a huckster's shop was opened from without, and the tinkling of its bell drew the shop-woman from some subterranean retreat. To her surprise, the visitor was a stranger of imposing appearance, tall, stout, well defended from the cold by a thick and glossy great-coat, and, in short, looking every inch a gentleman, as Mrs. Judkins afterwards said. She noticed, moreover, that his left arm was in a sling, composed of a gay silk India bandanna "worth ten shillings if it was worth a farden," according to her subsequent account.

The gentleman apologised for his intrusion; but he had understood that Mrs. Judkins had lodgers, or, at least, a lodger—a young person named Franklin. Might he be permitted to speak to her?

With many elaborate curtsies Mrs. Judkins informed the stranger that Mrs. Franklin had been "taking on" so ever since she was brought home in the doctor's chaise, and was so bad still, that she was not fit to be seen. But if the other woman would do——

The other woman *would* do; and, Martha White being called, descended into the little shop, after ascertaining that Letty was in a troubled, uneasy sleep, to find herself in the presence of Mr. Oakley.

It would have been a curious study for a physiognomist, had one been present, to note the changes in that good woman's features as she looked up into the kindly countenance of her unexpected visitor—a change, first of all, from a look of anxious care and sorrow, to one of blank astonishment, and from that to passionate anger, mingled with abhorrence and terror. The squire was no professed physiognomist; but he must have been

blind if he had not perceived the sudden effect produced by his appearance.

"You did not expect to see me, I suppose," said he, first speaking.

"No, Mr. Oakley; and, if you must have the truth, I did not want to see you, either," said Martha, boldly looking the squire in the face, and speaking as boldly. The time had been, and not long since, when she could have courtesied low and spoken with bated breath in his presence; for, though not an Oakleyite by birth and training, Martha White had lived long enough in the vicinity of that village to catch the trick of Oakley-humility and lip-reverence; but this feeling was all over now, and she stood ready to do battle valiantly with the enemy of her master's house, squire or no squire.

"Well," said Mr. Oakley, mildly, "perhaps I ought not to wonder at your not wanting to see me, and I respect your fidelity to the poor unhappy man whose servant you have been so many years."

"I have lived with William Franklin ever since he was so high," sobbed Martha bitterly, and holding her hand on a level with her waist; "and I know there is not *that* harm in him, for all that has been done against him. Poor William! and for you, Squire Oakley, to go to transport him!"

"I did not come to argue about that matter, Martha," rejoined the squire; "my object in calling here is to inquire after your young Mrs. Franklin, and to express my sympathy with her in her misfortunes."

"If you had thought of that before, Mr. Oakley, it might have been of some use; there's no use in it now, begging your honour's pardon for being so bold as to say so," retorted Martha, spiritedly.

"And to offer all the help that is in my power," continued

the squire, without heeding the interruption. "I suppose," he added, "that I cannot see the poor woman?"

"If you want to kill my young mistress outright, Mr. Oakley, you can go and see her; there's her bedroom, up there" (pointing to the staircase), "and you can go up. I sha'n't hinder you, Mr. Oakley; only you'll please to take the consequences. You gentlefolks," she added, "think you have a right to go anywhere and do anything."

"I see that you are determined to debar me of the privilege," said the squire, with a half-smile, which soon disappeared, however, for he was sorely troubled; "and it will be of little use to repeat to you that I feel very deeply for Mrs. Franklin."

"Hear him say that!" exclaimed Martha, turning to Mrs. Judkins, who stood by with wide-open eyes and pursed-up mouth; "only hear him! and he just come from getting her husband sent away from her for twenty years!"

A weak, wailing cry from the chamber above proclaimed at this moment that the sufferer's troubled sleep was over. Darting, therefore, one parting glance of concentrated womanly anger at him whom she looked upon as the cause of all the present sorrow, Martha hastily retreated, leaving her landlady and the squire together.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

A MAN MAY SOMETIMES BE THE BEST JUDGE OF HIS OWN ACTIONS.

"THIS is a sad case, Mrs. Judkins," said the squire.

"Yes, sir, the poor creature is very bad," returned the woman, respectfully enough, but with some degree of reserve in her manner. To do her justice, she was less disposed to yield



**THE SQUIRE CHARGES MRS. JUDKINS TO TAKE CARE OF LETTY FRANKLIN.**



to the imposing bearing of the visitor than to make common cause with her poor lodgers.

"I am sorry for Mrs. Franklin," continued he; "and I must beg of you to pay her what attentions are in your power."

"I don't see why you should think of me otherwise, sir," retorted Mrs. Judkins, somewhat tartly; "you mayn't suppose it, sir; but I has a woman's feelings, though I be in the rough. Anyhow, my lodgers sha'n't have to say that they don't get what they pays for; and, being a poor woman myself, I can't say more than that."

"Well, well; there is no occasion for us to misunderstand one another," said Mr. Oakley, mildly; "I tell you sincerely that my object in finding out the poor young woman is to make her trouble as light as possible; and—not that I wish to bribe you, or to intimate any want of disposition on your part—if you will accept this" (he put a guinea into her hand), "and provide any little extra comforts for the day or two Mrs. Franklin remains in your lodgings, I will promise you shall not lose by it."

"Money answereth all things." It answered, in this case, to open Mrs. Judkins's eyes to see that the squire was "a fair-speaking and fair-doing gentleman;" and before he left her little shop he had been favoured with an account of that good woman's peculiar and personal troubles, to which, we regret to say, he paid little heed. What was more to the purpose, he obtained the address of the young surgeon who had kindly interested himself on Mrs. Franklin's behalf, and, late as it then was, he proceeded to his residence.

He found Mr. Haydon at home.

"You are at a loss to account for my interest in your poor patient, Mr. Haydon," said the squire, after a few minutes' conversation.

"Pardon me, sir; I said nothing of the kind."

"No; but I understand. And you, sir, I have no doubt, can understand that the performance of a painful public duty is consistent and compatible with a true feeling of charity towards those who innocently suffer from the wrong-doing of the guilty."

"I dare say you are quite right, sir; at any rate, I have nothing to say to the contrary," said the young doctor.

"We understand each other, then; and I need only repeat my particular personal request, that you will spare no efforts nor skill on behalf of the poor young woman—looking to me for remuneration."

Mr. Haydon bowed stiffly.

"And if she should be able to bear removal in a day or two——"

"She will not be able to bear removal for some time to come, I fear," said the surgeon; "you are not aware of it, I see; but the poor creature's case is critical."

"Critical! do you mean to intimate any real danger?"

"I mean only what I have said, sir; the shock of to-day's events, together with the state of health previously, and the heat of the crowded court, are, I fear, hastening on a crisis; and, if so, a few hours will show whether the poor thing has constitutional strength to get through the trial."

"You shock me, doctor. I was not at all aware—can nothing be done?" exclaimed the squire, in broken sentences, and extremely agitated.

"Nothing shall be wanting that can be done," said the young doctor. "I have taken the case in hand, and I intend to go through with it," he added, with some degree of professional pride, perhaps.

"And the fees? Excuse me—but—I take it for granted that you are aware the poor woman is not at present in a position—of herself, I mean—to incur any heavy expense."

"I happened to be in court to-day, and I heard what her most unfortunate husband said. I suppose that some part of his statement at least may be believed, sir," replied the surgeon, coldly but civilly.

The squire bit his lip. "What do you take me to be, Mr. Haydon? But, no matter; I see you are prejudiced against me. No man can do his duty to his country, and not be misconstrued. But no matter; the woman shall not suffer, at any rate."

"Not suffer!"

"Not unnecessarily suffer. But we will not discuss this subject. I was speaking of your fees: you must allow me——" and the squire's hand was once more in his pocket.

The young doctor's ire was roused. "This is really extraordinary," he began to say.

"Not at all. You will consent, at any rate, to be my almoner: let the poor woman have this." He opened his pocket-book, and laid on the table a bank-note of some value.

"As coming from you, sir?" demanded Mr. Haydon.

"No, no: from a friend—say from a friend who feels for her sad misfortune: nothing more. I am not hard-hearted, I hope, though I have had firmness and principle enough to go through with a most unpleasant duty."

"It shall be as you please, sir," said the surgeon, who did not feel justified in refusing the commission thus thrust upon him; and shortly afterwards he bowed the visitor from his door.

"Not hard-hearted! I beg leave to think that you are, though; and cold-blooded into the bargain," was young Haydon's unspoken thought when he found himself alone. But he was mistaken. A man may sometimes be the better judge of his own actions.

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## CHAPTER XX.

## LETTY FRANKLIN'S ILLNESS AND RECOVERY.

THE surgeon's prognostications were verified by the event. Forty-eight hours, or thereabouts, after her fainting-fit in the County Hall, the young wife was the mother of a dead infant, and she herself was on the margin of that cold river by which death is sometimes typified. Could Letty have decided her own fate at that time, she would assuredly have followed her child into the vast mysterious regions on the other side of that river. She had no desire to live. Poor thoughtless soul! she wanted to die, and she, at the time, thought of nothing, cared for nothing, beyond the grave.

"Let me die; oh, why don't you let me die? It is cruel, cruel to try to keep me!" she cried frantically, though her voice could scarcely rise above a whisper, as she tried to push away the cordial Martha held to her lips.

"And what would become of your Willy, your own little Willy?" said the faithful servant. "You mustn't give up so, my precious. Now come do, do be a brave woman; it will all come right by-and-by."

The young surgeon was also there to encourage her; and he brought his wife to second his efforts. Between them they talked sad nonsense, I dare say, and attempted to raise hopes in the patient which could have very little foundation; for they spoke of a petition to the Government, which was being prepared and numerous signed, for a remission or alteration of William Franklin's sentence; and they spoke of his speedy restoration to liberty as almost beyond a doubt. The petition was indeed a fact; but the expectation of its success was very feeble.

But the spark of life was thus kept fanned, and though it

flickered doubtfully, it did not expire. Gradually the patient regained strength; and with the renovation of life came the wish to live.

Through the whole time of Letty's long illness, and during her slow recovery, she wanted nothing that kindness could minister. Martha White was constantly by her side; and Mrs. Judkins, her landlady, was warmed and melted into unwonted softness, either by natural womanly sympathy, or by present and prospective benefits, or perhaps from a mixture of motives which she herself could not well have defined. Gifts, moreover, numerous and various enough to set up a small family in house-keeping, were poured in upon the feeble patient, as from a cornucopia, from day to day; while the lavish bounty in money from the (to Letty) unknown and mysterious source, which had reached her through her benevolent doctor, was laid aside untouched, because unneeded.

Though, however, poor Letty wanted nothing that kindness could minister, there was, in two quarters, a withholding of sympathy on which she might justly have calculated. Her own relatives, for instance, to adopt the expressive complaint of the Psalmist, "kept aloof from her sore;" and her mother-in-law though she once or twice visited her during her illness, and took little Willy to see his mother, was not only absorbed in her own grief, but seemed ready to attribute the cause of that grief, in some measure at least, to Letty herself.

"William never was the son to me sin' he was married that he was before," she moaned on one of the occasions we have mentioned; "and if Letty hadn't cockered him up to go to the election that day, this trouble wouldn't have come upon me." This was said to Martha.

"For shame, mistress," said the out-spoken woman, in reply: "you have no right to say any such thing. Letty has always

been a good daughter to you, and a good wife to William ; and I won't hear her run down."

The old mistress was accordingly silent, for she had a wholesome fear of Martha, when, as in the present instance, she inwardly felt that Martha was right ; but the heart-burning remained, in spite of her better reason.

Nearly a month passed away before Letty could leave her bed, except as she was lifted from it, and another month elapsed before she could be removed with safety ; meanwhile, some circumstances favourable for her future prospects had taken place. The warm-hearted squire, though he remained inexorable towards Franklin, and refused to sign the petition for a commutation of his sentence, on the ground that he considered him to be a murderer in design, had determined from the first to take the mother and wife and child of the convict under his own immediate and powerful protection, while keeping his own agency concealed. Thus he secretly employed Mr. Peake to act on their behalf in the winding-up of affairs with the creditors of Franklin, and in the sale of "The Lees" farm ; and this was done so successfully, that a sum of two or three hundred pounds was saved from the wreck, and invested in the name of William Franklin, the child. He also, as secretly, procured for the desolate women, from a third party, the offer of a pretty cottage in the village of P., which our readers may remember was three miles from Oakley, and was also just outside the Oakley estate. The cottage was to be theirs for a nearly nominal rent ; and it was furnished ostensibly by the subscriptions of old friends and neighbours, but in reality by the squire himself, solely. In addition to this, Mr. Peake announced, in a letter to the two women, that he was empowered to allow them an annuity from a source which he was forbidden to reveal, and which would be sufficient for

their comfortable support. And as this intimation was accompanied by insinuations intended to mislead, neither the mother nor the wife of Franklin imagined that in his determined prosecutor was to be found their generous benefactor.

Other particulars of the squire's anonymous bounty might be added; but it is sufficient to say, that when Letty Franklin could bear removal in safety, a comfortable home awaited her and Martha White, who refused to hear of a separation from her young mistress. By this time, the steady course of criminal law had removed William Franklin from the jail at H. to the prison ship. The petition on his behalf had been rejected; and he, with a miserable herd of abandoned criminals, had commenced the dreary voyage to the convict settlement of Port Jackson.

Miles Oakley could at last rest satisfied; for he was the purchaser (at a high price) of "The Lees" farm. He could now inclose his vast estate within a ring fence; and he never thought of the story of Naboth's vineyard.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE COTTAGE AT P.—ITS INMATES AND THEIR VISITORS.

A FEW acres of meadow-land were attached to the cottage at P., and this enabled the new tenants to keep a cow, which the younger Mrs. Franklin was induced to purchase with the balance of the bank-note she had received through her benevolent doctor, after deducting the amount of Mrs. Judkins's moderate bill. The keeping of this cow, while it added to the resources of the cottagers, gave an excuse for the retention of Martha White as dairy-woman—Letty employing herself, mean-

while, in plain needle-work, with which she was kindly enough supplied by a few affluent families in the neighbourhood, who sympathised in her misfortunes.

The pecuniary circumstances of the poor women were, in short, more comfortable than might have been anticipated; but, as a faithful chronicler, I am bound to say that their pretty rustic cottage was the abode, not only of sorrow, which was natural enough, but also of discord.

In sad truth, the three women did not get on together so well as they had formerly done at "The Lees" farm, and the sorrow which should have bound them to each other in mutual help, and as bearers of one another's burdens, was in a great measure the cause of their disunion.

The elder Mrs. Franklin, for instance, clung, with the perversity of an obstinate and ignorant or, let us say, a narrow-minded woman, to the absurd idea that her son's fate had been brought about by Letty; and though she had once been silenced on this topic by Martha, the complaint was constantly breaking out afresh in various forms, sometimes in innuendoes, at other times in direct charges. Then as mother-in-law she was jealous of the kindness shown by strangers to her daughter-in-law, and of the strong affection evinced by Martha White in the same quarter.

"I am nothing and nobody now," moaned the poor woman to herself, or to any gossip whose ear she could catch; "'tis Letty that gets all the pity and all the help, and I get all the blame and the shame. As if William wasn't my son, and I hadn't as much feeling about him as his wife can have. Oh dear, oh dear!" And then she would weep bitterly and rock herself in her chair until some fresh circumstance gave a yet angrier turn to her feelings, and then she would vent her reproaches upon Letty or Martha, or both of them indiscriminately.

On the other hand—for we are not writing about faultless

beings, by any means—Letty had failings, which cast the stronger shadow now that she had no husband to stand between her and the sun. More than half distracted by the sudden calamity which had befallen her, and having no room in her heart for other thoughts than those connected with her banished husband, she neglected her obvious duties, and when irritated by the reproaches of her mother-in-law, returned taunt for taunt. In these painful domestic wranglings, Martha White invariably sided with her young mistress, and so freely lectured the one she had virtually discarded, that no wonder the unhappy woman considered herself reduced to a cipher in the household.

In the midst of these discords, little Willy Franklin was in danger, if not of total neglect, yet of that fitful and irresolute attention which is sometimes almost worse. A noisy, boisterous child, and too young not merely to comprehend, but even to be aware of the altered circumstances around him, and losing all infantine recollections of his father, his high spirits grated upon his poor afflicted mother's heart, and drove her from his society, while the elder woman refused, from what she would have called principle, to have anything to do with other people's children; hadn't she had trouble enough with her own? Happily for the boy, however, Martha White here stepped into the breach, and took him under her own charge; and as she mingled some degree of firmness with her strong affection for "poor master's unfortunate boy," the consequences of parental neglect were not so palpable as they otherwise would in all probability have been.

Before leaving these domestic details, we must add that visitors occasionally looked in upon the desolate family. Among these was the Vicar of Oakley. This gentleman, being deeply imbued with the conviction that (at least in all matters non-ecclesiastic) his patron was as near to perfection as any mortal

squire could be, tried very hard, on his first visit, to inspire his auditors with the same veneration, and to induce them humbly to kiss the rod which had been wielded with such smarting effect, if not immediately by the squirely hand, yet through his agency ; but, though disagreeing in almost all things besides, the three women unitedly opened such a cry upon the imprudent mediator, that he was fain to beat a speedy retreat ; and, being a wise as well as a good man in a certain fashion, he never afterwards meddled with the tender topic, but in his future visits endeavoured to pour the balm of spiritual consolation into the wounded spirits of the mourners. This had better effect ; and as, according to Martha White, the good man did not take any airs upon himself, his visits were, at any rate, not unwelcome.

Another frequent visitor to the cottage had a still more delicate part to play in her benevolent mission. We have already slightly introduced the lady of "The Oaks" to our readers, who will be prepared to imagine that she was not an unfeeling witness of the distress of the Franklins, while, at the same time, she concurred in the justice of the punishment which had overtaken the hardened man (as she conceived him to be) who had so nearly slain her husband. Very soon after their removal to P., therefore, Mrs. Oakley surprised the poor women by driving up to their door in her pony chaise, and requesting an interview. With a great deal of prudence, she entirely forbore any attempt to justify her husband, and avoided all reference to the primary cause of their sorrow, while she opened her large womanly heart in sympathy with it. What was still more self-denying and difficult in the circumstances of the case, the lady refrained from offers of charitable assistance, rightly judging that, from her, such offers would be considered as an insult ; but she spoke so wisely and kindly, and brought

herself so down to the level of their griefs, without the slightest appearance of patronage, that a way was opened for subsequent intercourse. She did much more than this. We have said of Mrs. Oakley, in our first chapter, that she was an earnest Christian, and, as such, she was no doubt out of harmony with the prevailing indifference to evangelical godliness, or, at least, with the cold morality of the times of which we are writing. And though in some favoured spots, and under favourable circumstances, religion (apostolical and vital religion) flourished and brought forth good fruit, even abundantly, it was not so in and around the village in which Mrs. Oakley's lot had been cast. Her faith and hope and love had been kept alive. The fire on the altar of her heart had not been permitted to go out; for there was One mightier than herself who tended it day and night. But there is no doubt that she did often aspire to higher happiness in her spiritual life, as well as to greater opportunities for usefulness than had seemed to present themselves in the circle in which she moved. Here then seemed a providential opening which she was not slow to embrace, and as a possessor of that pure religion and undefiled, which moved her to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, she could make an attempt to convey the gospel to their weary souls. And this she did, but, alas! it was hard and stony ground on which she cast the seed of the Kingdom.

Eventually, also, Mrs. Oakley might have mediated between her husband and the Franklins with so much success as to soften their hearts towards him; but before the favourable time arrived, the opportunity was gone. Meanwhile, however, her visits were welcome; and the more so, that little Willy Franklin, when he had broken down a barrier of childish bashfulness, became mightily enamoured of the good lady, and claimed as a playmate the child by whom she was generally accompanied.



Another occasional visitor to the cottage was Mr. Peake, the lawyer, who, having business that way, as he said, made a point of punctually, every quarter-day, alighting at the door and leaving in Letty's hands the portion of the annuity which he averred to be due. He was taciturn enough on this subject; but he was kind and respectful, and his short visits were at least tolerated for the assistance they brought.

A more welcome visitor to Letty, and the last we shall mention, was Mr. Anthony Melburn, the magistrate who had spoken so favourably of William Franklin in his evidence at the trial. This gentleman was a singular compound of generous feeling and extreme carefulness (not to say parsimony), when money was concerned, which was partly to be accounted for, probably, by the fact that his earlier life had been a hard and long struggle with grinding poverty. Mr. Melburn, who had throughout been convinced of Franklin's innocence, and had headed the unsuccessful petition in his favour, continued to bestir himself on behalf of the injured man and his family, especially when he found that money relief was not required. For some months after the convict ship had sailed, he plagued the Home Secretary with memorials, and letters, and reminders, and rejoinders: and during this time he frequently called at the cottage to report progress, and to feed the faint, flickering hope of poor Letty, that her husband's pardon would eventually be granted, and that he would ere long be restored to her. But, unfortunately for his success in these benevolent efforts, Mr. Melburn's politics were obnoxious to the Government, and he had no influential friends in high quarters to back his strong representations. The consequence was, that after several curt and unpromising replies, every one of which would have stopped the mouth or pen of a less sanguine advocate, the gentleman received at length a positive refusal on the part of the Government

to interfere with the due course of justice, and a request that he would cease from his unavailing importunities.

It was with a sad heart that Mr. Melburn reported to those more immediately concerned the final non-success of his applications; but he did not entirely cease from his attempts to console. And he partly succeeded in this, by representing in bright and glowing colours the far-off regions to which Franklin had been banished, and the great chances there were of well-conducted, intelligent, and industrious convicts attaining to comfort, and even to positive wealth, in addition to liberty, in the new colony.

"Wait a year or two with patience and hope," said this comforter, "and your husband will be sending for you to share in his prosperity; and by-and-by you will be founding a new family on the other side of the world, and feel thankful that he and you did not stop in England, to struggle out your whole existence in vain attempts to get your heads above water."

Whether or not the well-meaning magistrate believed in his own flattering representations, it was not in the nature of things that Letty should not be in some measure influenced by them. And so it came to pass, that in her secret mind sprang up an indefinite anticipation that her present trial was destined, at some future time, to have a happy termination in a re-union with her banished husband. With this object always in view, she scraped and saved, and laid by the greater proportion of her own earnings, that the fulfilment of her hopes might not be checked or hindered by immediate lack of resources on her part.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

## A LETTER AND ITS RESULTS.

A LETTER came from William Franklin, which dispelled for ever all the fond day-dreams of his wife. It was at the commencement of the second year of his absence, and the letter was the first Letty had received from her husband since the sailing of the convict ship. It was dated from Port Jackson, a few weeks after his arrival at the colony, and was full of materials for sorrow and alarm. The voyage, which had occupied more than six months, was described as a lengthened torture; the convict ship, as a floating hell; the unhappy convicts, who were crammed and crowded together below deck, were represented as comparable only to lost spirits, polluting the air with the most horrid blasphemies; while the officers over them were described as little better than fiends, whose chief delight was in tormenting the poor wretches whom fate had placed in their power.

A mutiny had broken out among the convicts during the voyage, which with difficulty, and not without bloodshed, had been quelled; and then had followed scenes of heart-sickening punishment, in which the innocent suffered alike with the guilty. Then came a fever—the veritable jail-fever—which carried off one third of the miserable herd of convicts, and decimated the ship's crew. At length came the end of the voyage, but not of the sufferings; and the writer went on to speak bitterly of the treatment to which he, in common with his fellow convicts, was subjected—working by day in gangs, chained to each other, in hard and killing labour upon the roads, or in the prison yards; badly fed at all times, and sometimes nearly starved; driven at night into barracks, or, more properly,

filthy sties, where they were herded together like beasts; tyrannized over by men who were hardened against sights of suffering and sounds of sorrow, and were armed with almost irresponsible power; and subjected to the severest corporal punishments on the slightest pretences. All this and more was the burden of the doleful letter, couched in the strong language which was natural to a man whose soul was boiling within him from a sense of wrong, and especially natural to one whose habits and education, like William Franklin's, had unfitted him equally for association with the vile and abandoned, and for tame submission to despotic authority.\*

Franklin went on in his letter to heap upon Miles Oakley, as his persecutor, the fiercest objurgations of unhallowed wrath, calling down upon him the bitterest curses, and charging his wife to repudiate all benefits from his hand, should he dare to offer them, and to train up their boy in stern hatred of his father's enemy.

Towards the close of his letter the unhappy writer bade a touching and solemn farewell to Letty and his mother, plainly declaring that his condition was so unbearable that death was better than life, and hinting obscurely at some approaching crisis which would almost certainly bring the longed-for release.

In a postscript, Franklin explained that the letter had been surreptitiously written, and would be sent to England by a secret channel, so as not to pass under the eye of his gaolers. And once more he said farewell. "Good-bye, mother; good-bye, my poor, poor, wife," thus he wrote; "give Willy a last kiss from me, and tell him not to forget his murdered father. Good-bye, all; God comfort you, Letty, dear Letty! This is the last

\* This description of the horrors of a convict ship in the early days of transportation, is strictly and unexaggeratedly true, as is what has to follow in future chapters, relating to the same subject.

time you will hear from your unfortunate husband. Once more, good-bye."

A week or two after the arrival of this letter, the lady of "The Oaks," on paying her accustomed visit to the cottage, found the elder Mrs. Franklin in a high state of excitement and alarm, accompanied by wringing of hands and other external signs and tokens of distress. It was some time before the visitor could obtain an intelligible answer to her inquiries; but at length it transpired that both her daughter-in-law and Martha White had disappeared on the preceding day, had been absent all night, and were yet missing.

"It is all along of that letter," cried the poor woman, on being further questioned.

"That letter?"

"A letter from poor William," sobbed William's mother.

"I did not know that you had heard from your unhappy son; may I see the letter?" asked the lady.

Mrs. Franklin drew it from her bosom. "It was to me, as well as to Letty," she said; "and so I thought I had a right to have it." She did not add that the proprietorship and safe keeping of this letter had been the occasion of angry words between herself and Letty; but Mrs. Oakley could scarcely avoid drawing this inference from the words spoken. She took the letter without remark, however, and read it. Her brow clouded as she proceeded. A strong feeling of compassion for the misguided man was first excited in her heart, as she perused his doleful experiences of the first-fruits of his punishment; but eventually this gave way to deeper indignation against the writer, for the revengeful outburst of his passion towards her husband. She merely said, however, as she gave back the epistle:

"I am very sorry for your son, Mrs. Franklin; and I trust

his mind has by this time become more calm. But," added the lady, "distressing as this letter must have been to your poor daughter, I do not see how it accounts for her disappearance."

"It almost drove her out of her senses, ma'am, as it has done me too, for that matter," continued the weeping woman; "and ever since the day it came she has been wandering about from place to place, quite wild-like. She has gone out in the morning, ma'am, day after day, leaving everything for me and Martha to do, and not coming back till night, and not saying a word about where she has been; and now——"

"It is to be hoped she will return, as she has done before; but you say that Martha White is gone too."

"Yes, ma'am, and I shall never see them again—never, never; and it is all my fault, too;" sobbed the poor woman, with honest compunction.

"I do not understand it," said the sympathizing and puzzled visitor; "how can it be all your fault, and why do you say that you shall never see them again?"

"Because, ma'am, because"—and then it came out reluctantly that Mrs. Franklin, in the midst of her grief for her son, had given way to a more than usual violent storm of reproaches against her poor fellow-sufferer, in which the old servant had a full share, and thus she had driven them both away. Moreover, on the morning of their disappearance, a scrap of paper had been left behind, on which Letty had written, "I am going away; I shall never trouble you again; take care of Willy for his father's sake." The paper was blotted and blistered with tears.

"But where can the foolish women be gone?" asked the visitor, who seemed to be getting into a maze of perplexities without hope of extrication.

"They'll be found in some pond or river, in one another's arms," responded the agitated woman, with a loud cry of horror

at the idea which her own imagination had raised ; "drowned ! drowned !"

"No, no ; nonsense, Mrs. Franklin," said the lady, "you ought rather to hope that Martha has gone to take care of your unfortunate daughter, and will bring her back soon in safety."

"You don't know Martha White, ma'am," rejoined Mrs. Franklin, with some infusion of her late habitual jealousy ; "she is so bound up with Letty that there is not a mortal thing she would refuse to do if Letty only held up her little finger."

"At any rate, let us hope, then, that Martha has equal influence to withhold your daughter from doing anything so desperate as you fear. Depend upon it, they will both find their way home again soon. Poor Letty isn't the woman to desert her own child."

Mrs. Franklin shook her head sadly. "It isn't much attention she has paid Willy of late," she said ; adding, however, "To be sure, she hugged him and kissed him till the child was wellnigh frightened, the night before she went away ; but this only shows what was in her poor weak mind then."

In short, there was no disabusing Mrs. Franklin's mind of the idea that Letty and Martha had disappeared for ever ; and (mixing up her apprehensions on this account with a not unnatural consideration for her own ease and comfort) what she should do with Willie she didn't know.

"Do not trouble yourself needlessly about the child," said the kindly-disposed visitor ; "let him return with me in my chaise ; my nursemaid shall take charge of him for a day or two. My Miles will be very glad of a companion."

Accordingly, little Willie was called, and a few articles of clothing being hastily put together, the boy, who had before been disconsolate at the loss of his mother and Martha, readily submitted to being lifted into the pony chaise. Meanwhile, as

nothing further could be done to help the poor woman out of her trouble, Mrs. Oakley drove off, promising to return on the morrow, when she trusted she should hear of the safe return of the missing females.

The morrow came, however, and many morrows, without bringing any tidings of Letty and Martha; and all inquiries which were set on foot respecting the fugitives ended in disappointment.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A NURSEMAID WANTED—AND SUPPLIED.

ON a bright but blustering March day, two women stood sheltering themselves as they best could from the high wind, in a narrow and black-visaged lane, leading out of the Broadway, in the old town of Deptford. The women were jaded and wayworn, otherwise their appearance was respectable enough, though they were differently attired, one being in deep mourning, with her face inclosed in that conformation of plaited book muslin or lawn, known as widows' weeds, while the other was in coloured gown, kerchief, shawl, and bonnet.

"I'll wait here for you, my precious," said the coloured to the black-gown wearer; "'tis only a few steps now; but before you go, think again, my darling creature; have you made up your mind to it?"

"Quite: yes, yes, yes," replied the other, with a firm voice; though, had a passer-by looked curiously in her face, her lips would have been seen to turn ashy pale. Indeed, her companion noticed the change, and remarked upon it with an anxious look and tone.

"It is nothing—nothing. I shall be better in a minute,"



said the widow; and before the other could reply she was rapidly hastening down the street.

She knocked at the door of a respectable house, and was admitted, on first mentioning a name.

The room into which she was first shown was in great confusion. It had little furniture; but on the uncarpeted floor, instead of tables and chairs, were numerous packages, some in strong boxes, others in bales; some already packed and corded, others in process of packing.

"You can go up into the drawing-room and see mistress and master," said the girl who had given admittance to the widow, leading the way on to the first floor. In another minute the stranger stood before "mistress and master."

"Pray be seated, my good woman," said the latter, who was in a clerical undress. The woman sat down on the nearest chair. "You are the person my brother wrote to me about, I presume; but he did not prepare me with the intelligence of your being a widow: have you been long bereaved?" The gentleman asked this question in a kindly tone, which seemed to touch the poor woman, for she put her handkerchief to her eyes, which rapidly filled to overflowing as she replied in faint, broken, and sorrowful tones—

"Going on for two years, sir."

"Two years! and you are yet young. My brother"—the gentleman referred to a note which he had been holding in his hand—"says something about an experienced person, which led me to suppose that you were older."

"They always said I looked young for my age, sir," replied the woman, quietly; "and I have had experience."

"In nursing, you mean," added the gentleman. "Have you had—excuse my asking—any children of your own? Of course you have none now, or you would not think of leaving England."

"Two, sir; I have had two dear little ones," cried the poor widow, hysterically; "but one of them didn't—live; and the other is left in good hands, I assure you, sir." And then she burst into tears, which, however, by a strong effort, she soon managed to suppress.

"My dear, you distress the poor woman," interposed the lady, who had not before spoken, and who was then nursing an infant. "Pray excuse Mr. Haydon, Martha. Your name is Martha, I believe?"

The woman made an affirmative gesture, but did not speak.

"Mr. Haydon does not wish, I am sure, to open your wounds afresh. You think, then, that you can undertake the charge?" continued the lady.

"Yes, ma'am."

"It is a long voyage, and a very wild country we are going to, Martha," added the gentleman; "and you may not have an opportunity of returning for a long time, should you wish to do so. Have you considered it well? and do you think you shall be able to bear the banishment from your home and friends?"

"You and your lady are going away from home and friends too, sir, I think," said the young widow.

"That's very true, Mrs. White——"

"Please to call me Martha, sir; I should like it best, if you have no objection," said the applicant quietly.

"By all means. Well, Martha, it is very true that we are leaving home and dear friends; but, as a minister of religion, I have no choice but to follow the leadings of Providence. My duty seems to call me to that distant country, and my wife thinks it her duty to be where her husband is."

"May God Almighty bless her!" exclaimed the young widow, involuntarily, as it seemed; for she instantly began to apologise for her sudden outburst of feeling.

"There is no need to apologise," said the clergyman, with moistened eyes. "It is an acceptable prayer; and I too say, 'May God Almighty bless her for her willingness to endure hardships with me and for my sake.' But you, Martha——"

"I am willing to bear them too, for her sake—if—if you will but let me go as her servant," said the young widow.

There was not much more to be said. Charles Haydon, the young clergyman (for he was young), who was going out to the colony of New South Wales as convict chaplain, was too glad to engage, after numberless failures, a respectable servant of his brother John's recommending, to accompany his wife and take charge of the child. And after a few more questions, which were satisfactorily answered, Martha White (as the applicant was named in brother John's letter) engaged to return that same day to the house, preparatory to embarking on board the ship, which a week later was to sail from the port of Deptford.

Then she hurried back to keep her appointment with the companion she had left near the Broadway.

"I am going! I am going!" she said, as she threw herself into her friend's arms, and sobbed and wept like a child on her breast.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### WILLY FRANKLIN.

THE compassion of the lady of "The Oaks" was powerfully excited by the forlorn condition of the deserted child; and this feeling was increased when, after the lapse of several days, no tidings could be learned of the child's mother, or of the companion of her flight. There was, indeed, only one person

in the neighbourhood who could have given any information respecting the fugitives, namely, Mr. Haydon, the surgeon of H.; but it happened that the news of their disappearance did not reach him until some weeks after the event; and the information which he then gave of his own innocent share in it was too late to be available. The ship in which his brother's passage to New South Wales was taken had sailed; and there was no present means of ascertaining whether the Martha White, whom he had recommended as a nurse, had been received into his brother's service. Granting this to have been the case, it gave no clue to the mystery of Letty Franklin's abandonment of her home and child. This mystery, however, will be cleared up as we proceed onwards with our story.

Meanwhile little Willy remained under the care of his benevolent protectress, who eventually dismissed the idea of returning him upon the hands of his grandmother, who, on her part, very willingly acceded to a proposal which eased her of a heavy charge and burden.

The squire at first good-naturedly pooh-poohed his lady's whim to bring up little Willy as a companion to their own child; but he did not really oppose it. Possibly some feeling of benevolent compunction touched his heart when he remembered that, however innocently and unintentionally, he himself had been the rock upon which the wreck and ruin of his former neighbour of "The Lees" had been consummated, and was rather glad than otherwise to give shelter and refuge to the unoffending child of the man whom he regarded as his bitter enemy.

The two boys, therefore, grew up together; and little or no difference was placed between them. Servants were charged to pay an equal amount of kindness and attention to each; and as they soon perceived that it was to their interest to do this, the requirement was easily obeyed.

It will be readily understood that among the strictest charges given to those around, was that of entire silence respecting Willy's antecedents; and though it is difficult to stop the mouths of servants, this injunction was so far regarded, that the boy, when he began to understand and to reason, had only a dim and mysterious impression corresponding with the sentiments of all with whom he was brought into contact. He could not help thinking of his father as having attempted, and nearly perpetrated, a savage murder; and of his mother as a heartless woman, who had abandoned her own flesh and blood, and had thus forfeited all claim upon his filial remembrances. These impressions were unhappily strengthened by the occasional intercourse which was permitted, rather than encouraged, between his grandmother and himself. The aged woman, while prospering and increasing in worldly goods—thanks to the secret bounty of the squire—had also become more gloomy and morose. She had no strong affection for her grandson, of whose good fortune she was unreasonably jealous, seeing that that good fortune had relieved her of a burdensome duty; and as she grew infirm, in mind as well as in body, her old bemoanings of the shortcomings of her son, and the evil influences of her daughter-in-law, recurred to her memory and returned to her tongue. Strange, therefore, as it may seem, Willy Franklin had never heard the character of either his father or mother vindicated by her, whom he might naturally suppose would have been eager to set it in a fair light, had that been possible. On one occasion, having pressed a question relating to his parents upon his aged relative, she sternly replied—"Don't ask me anything about your father and mother, boy; for I don't mean to answer any of your questions. Just you be thankful that you are in good hands; and take care that *you* don't give way to pride and idleness."

There were others, indeed, who could have given the boy more favourable ideas of his banished father and missing mother. Mr. Anthony Melburn, for instance, had never wavered in his opinion of Franklin's innocence. But Mr. Melburn never visited at "The Oaks," between the master of which and himself had arisen and strengthened an irreconcilable feud, partly political and partly personal. He had, indeed, as we have seen, bestirred himself on behalf of the unfortunate convict, and had taken some measures, also, to discover the retreat of poor Letty. But these proving unavailing, and the child having in the meantime found an asylum, Mr. Melburn considered that the matter had passed out of his hands.

From such men as Morris, of the "Travellers' Rest," and Hodge Barton, Willy Franklin might occasionally have heard opinions respecting his unhappy father and the squire, at variance with those which he had insensibly and unavoidably imbibed; but, to say nothing of the improbability of the boy mixing much, if at all, in such company, who were these men? In the period which had elapsed since first we introduced him to our readers, Barton had sunk into poverty and contempt, and was known as a drunken, poaching vagabond, who had ruined himself by his vices, while attributing his downfall to having been malevolently turned out of one of the squire's best farms; and the landlord of the "Travellers' Rest" was known to have a bitter grudge against the squire for having, on more than one occasion, threatened to deprive him of his licence, on the ground of that road-side public-house being a notorious haunt for poachers. To set against the testimony of these worthless fellows, was that of Dick Border, the gamekeeper, who could show Willy the very spot in Hanging Wood where the crime was committed, and where, on that moonlight autumn night, he had found the squire bleeding and insensible. No

wonder, therefore, that the confused and imperfect knowledge which the boy had derived from tradition, of events which happened so many years before, landed him in the belief of his father's guilt.

We may add here, what has already been implied, that, after the one letter of which we have told, no tidings ever arrived of either the father or mother of the squire's protégé; and the natural deduction from this was, that the convict had early sunk under the toils and privations of his hard but deserved lot, and had found a dishonoured grave in the penal colony; and that the wife, if living, had fallen into connections, and taken to courses, which rendered her reckless of the child she had abandoned to the mercy of strangers.

Meanwhile, the childhood of Willy Franklin was passed in happy companionship with his foster-brother. Neither was his education neglected; for, great as was the squire's disapproval of much instruction for "the lower orders," he was wise enough to admit that a difference should be made with regard to others. Therefore, when the boys were five or six years of age, a governess was received into the family mansion; while, at the same time, the amiable, kind-hearted, and God-fearing lady of "The Oaks" anxiously and prayerfully devoted her time and talents to the spiritual and scriptural enlightenment of her own son and his foster-brother. Happily, Miss West, the governess, was like-minded with herself in relation to religion. Happily also, Mrs. Oakley did not expect miracles to be wrought in answer to her prayers: or rather, she knew that only by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit would the way of salvation by faith in Christ be inwardly revealed and savingly applied to any human soul. She knew, also, that there must be "first the blade" before there could be "the ear, and then the full corn in the ear;" and we shall see that she had long to wait;

but she never lost faith and hope while watching for the early signs of a coming harvest.

Time passed on, and the children of six years became great boys, and the squire, declaring that they had long enough been "under petticoat government," prevailed upon the Vicar of Oakley to undertake their masculine education. And it happening at this time that Mrs. Murray was seeking a teacher for her daughter, the governess of "The Oaks" readily transferred her services, and took up her abode at the vicarage.

The arrangement was, in fact, extremely agreeable to all parties; for the lady herself had no desire to remove far from the sheltering wing of her generous-hearted former employers, and the boys, who had become attached to their governess, were more reconciled to the change when they found that they were not entirely to lose her. The natural consequence, however, of her proximity to them at the vicarage, was a freer intercourse with the vicar's little daughter than a very prudish mother would have desired. But then they were all children together (so argued Mrs. Oakley; and so also secretly thought Mrs. Murray); and the intimacy was allowed, as the latter lady told her husband, to take its course.

The boys grew older; the girl grew older also; and the governess departed from Oakley Vicarage laden with benefits from her former patrons; but the intimacy between the young people was not by any means broken off. Not without some mental reference to consequences which might possibly ensue, and with a desire of averting them, the squire suddenly determined that his son should complete his education at Saint Radigunds College; and soon afterwards Willy Franklin was shipped off to sea, both being at that time nearly seventeen years old.



We shall have occasion to trace some future steps in the career of each of these young men; and it must be sufficient here to remark, that with much apparent similarity in character, there were many points in which they greatly differed. Miles Oakley, the young heir, was impulsive and capricious in his fancies; headlong in the pursuit of any object on which he had set his desires, while the desire lasted; but, the object attained, it was a chance if the desire did not suddenly cease. He was rich in good resolutions, but too often poor or slack in performances. He was quick of comprehension, and bade fair to be a good scholar (so the vicar said); but he was wanting in application. In short, in this and in other matters he was what a young man might naturally be expected to be, and did as a young man generally does, who is the sole heir to a large estate, and is perpetually under the dazzling influence of great expectations.

On the other hand, William Franklin, with less showy natural talents, was steady and determined; modest and moderate in self-estimation, but honest and honourable in making his actions square with his good intentions. Feeling, though not painfully, his subordinate and inferior position, and looking forward, as he had been partly taught to do, to his own exertions in future life, for any distinction he might desire, he was more discriminating than his companion and friend in the objects of his pursuit, and more earnest in following them.

There was one thing, however, in which these two youths resembled each other: they loved each other dearly.

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**PART THE SECOND.**



## CHAPTER I.

FROM WILLIAM FRANKLIN, MIDSHIPMAN, TO MILES OAKLEY, THE  
YOUNGER, AT SAINT RADIGUNDS COLLEGE.

WE have now to shift our scene, and to introduce other *dramatis personæ* into the story. Leaving Oakley, therefore, for a little while, our history will here be best carried forward by the insertion of a letter written by young Willy Franklin, midshipman on board his Majesty's ship "Glorious:"—

I will now try to fulfil my promise, and give you, dear Miles, a true, full, and particular account of all that has happened to me since we parted.

It seems an age ago, that same parting, though only four months have elapsed since we were beating the stubbles together. But it is not to be wondered at that the time has seemed long. Think, Miles; for thirteen years or more (which is farther back than my memory carries me) we had scarcely been separated for a day, till you were started off to Saint Radigunds, leaving me alone in my glory. I don't suppose that we fed out of the same pap-boat, because we must both have been beyond the age of pap when your dear mother, and my kindest, dearest friend and benefactress, took compassion on the poor little deserted and disgraced bantling that I was, and introduced me to your nursery. But after that time we played together, were merry or sad together (not much of the latter, though), schooled it together, rode together, fired our first shot

together—pshaw! if I go on in this strain, I shall never have done; so let me call back.

I can't tell you, Miles, how dull and mopish I was long after you left. I wandered about the plantations of dear Oakley, without aim or purpose, day after day, with no livelier companionship than that of old Dick Border, who is grumpier than ever, now that the rheumatism has fairly laid hold of him, and though leaving his legs free, has twisted his digits into such awful contortions that it will be some time before he can carry a gun again. You may guess how amiable Dick was likely to make himself under such circumstances.

Perhaps I should not have missed you so much—not quite so much, Miles—if your father had not at the same time been laid up with the gout, as you have already heard, so that he could neither walk nor ride for nearly a month after his return from Saint Radigunds. By the way, the good old squire lays it all off—the gout, I mean—to the “infamous concoction of sloe-berries and verjuice which they call port at Saint Radigunds, and with which he was half poisoned” (I give you his own words); so you had better beware, Miles; but I dare say he has already warned you.

So much for my prologue; and now I must tell you about myself.

One morning, about six weeks after you went away, came the letter-bag, as usual, while we were at breakfast; and your father unlocked it.

“This concerns you, Willy,” said the squire—(I may as well write of your father as the squire, it seems so natural): “This concerns you, Willy,” said he, when he had read the first letter that he opened; and he handed it over to me with a pleased look.

It was an official letter from some clerk or other at the

Admiralty, announcing that William Franklin was appointed a midshipman on board his Majesty's frigate "The Glorious;" and that he was to hold himself in readiness to join his ship on the arrival of further orders.

I suppose I must have looked uncommonly spoony, for I felt so when I had read the letter to the end. I am not sure that I did not have occasion to put my handkerchief to my eyes. However, I managed to stammer out—

"This is very kind of you, sir: I didn't know you had made any such application."

"No occasion to let you know anything about it till the thing was done, my boy," said the squire; "but I knew you had set your heart upon it; so there it is, and say no more about it." And he patted me on the shoulder encouragingly.

"What is it, Willy?" asked your mother, who was pouring out the tea; and rather wondering, I dare say, at what was passing between your father and myself.

"Nothing to signify much, Luce," said the squire, replying for me; "only Willy let out some time ago that he had set his heart on being a sailor, and so a sailor he is to be, that's all. Show the letter, my boy."

I should be an ungrateful brute, Miles, if I did not love, honour, and respect your father. So much reason as he must have to—to hate me, I had almost written; and to think how he has been more than a father to me all the days of my life. And your dear, honoured mother, Miles—if I should live a hundred years, I shall never forget all her kindness and tenderness. Never, surely, did any one receive good for evil in greater measure than I have done.

I am sure some such thoughts as these crossed my mind when Mrs. Oakley was reading the letter.

"I did not reckon on your leaving us so soon, Willy," said

she. "We shall miss you very much; and now that Miles is away too," she added.

"Ay, ay," said the squire; "we shall miss the boy sorely enough: I am sure *I* shall; but it will be for his good, my dear. Like all younger sons, Willy, you have got to make your way in the world; and the best thing I can do for you is to put you in the way of doing it."

This finished me off. I don't know exactly how I got away from the breakfast table; but I managed to make my escape, and was glad enough of an excuse for riding over to H. that morning, to get rid of my superfluous weakness, as you would have said.

By the way, when I was in H., a sort of adventure befel me; but I have not time to tell you about this now; and I must break off.

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## CHAPTER II.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME: IN CONTINUATION.

I TELL you what, Miles; if you expect me to spin long yarns, you will be mistaken. It is three days ago since I began this letter, and thought I had comfortably settled myself down in my berth without fear of interruption. Well, I had only written the above, when down comes the second lieutenant with an order to tumble up and make myself of some use.

There was no help for it, so I obeyed orders; and my gentleman has taken care, ever since then, that I shall have enough to do to put writing out of my—no, not out of my head, but out of my hands. I have received permission now, however, to continue my scrawl; and as it may be some time before our ship moves out of harbour, I shall keep to my

resolution of sending you a good budget:—and so—to resume:—

You may suppose that time did not hang very heavily on my hands after the notice I had received. Wise folks tell us that we never know the full value of our mercies till there is a prospect of losing them. I don't know how this may be; but I know that I never loved Oakley so much as on those last weeks and days that I spent there. Don't be afraid, Miles; I am not going to be soft; and I won't plague you with telling you how I wandered all over the estate, revisited, for the last time perhaps, our favourite haunts, looked in at all the cottages to say "Good-bye" to the old women, and, like an ass as I am, Miles, hung about the vicarage day after day, till good, worthy Mrs. Murray must have thought me half-bewitched; but no more of this, "at this present."

I need not tell you how busy your dear mother was, all this time, in making preparations for my departure. If you could have seen the superabundance of stores she provided for my first voyage—the shirts which she bought by the dozen and the stockings by the gross, the white ducks which she ordered of the tailor, and, the pumps which the shoemaker was commissioned to make—you might have supposed that I was going to sea as an admiral at least. Three days in the week, for a whole month, did the generous-hearted lady drive over to H., and return laden with spoil, but always remembering, when she arrived at home, that she had forgotten something which was so essential that another journey must be taken.

At last, in the joy of her kind heart, and yet brimful of sorrow, when she had, as she believed, completed my outfit, she invited the squire and myself to look over the accumulated treasures, which she had spread out in our old nursery, Miles.

The squire broke out into one of his good-natured laughs



when he saw tables, chairs, and the floor itself, covered and heaped up with goods.

"Why, Luce," said he, "you are not going to set Willy up as a general shop-keeper are you?"

"A shop-keeper!" echoed the lady; "no, I should think not, indeed."

"But, my darling, what else do you suppose the boy can be going to do with all these things? why, he will want a whole bumboat to himself, to take him and his traps on board; and then——"

"Nonsense, my dear; when they are nicely packed they won't take up much room."

"I would not advise you to try, however," said the squire. "Why, what have you got here, Luce, my love?" continued he, with another merry laugh, clearing his way carefully to a side-table.

"Why, sir, what should it be but a ham and a few bottles of wine, and——"

"Pickles and preserves, I see; but you don't mean——"

"The fare on board ship is very hard for one that has not been used to it," pleaded your mother.

"And you want to let Willy down softly, I see," said your father; "but I am afraid it won't do, Luce."

"I need not follow this argument any further, Miles, which ended in a sort of compromise, the result of which was, that when I got on board a full half of my cargo was refused admittance, and had to be sent back to "The Oaks" unopened. But I am anticipating.

The summons came at last, before I was well prepared for it; and, in the kindness of his heart, your father, though still threatened with a return of his enemy the gout, determined to accompany me to Portsmouth, where "The Glorious" was in harbour, refitting.

The evening before we left I paid a last visit to the vicarage. The vicar was as friendly as ever, and gave me a world of good advice; Mrs. Murray was especially gracious, and hoped I should get on and be a captain at least, "some of these days." But, but—— Well, Miles, we never had any secrets apart from each other; and you know what a fool I have made myself there any time within the last six months; so I won't conceal from you that the lady managed to give me a few broad hints, which I should have been a sodden-headed dunce not to understand. First of all, she hoped I would receive her apologies for Ellen's absence from the drawing-room. Poor girl, she had a bad headache, and was gone to lie down; but she had commissioned her mother to say good-bye to me, and to express her best wishes for my health and happiness, and so on. Ellen's head might have ached; but I heard the piano as I was approaching the door, and it suddenly stopped when I knocked; and you know Mrs. Murray never plays. But let this pass. It was not all, however; for the good lady went on to give me a motherly warning (having no reference to Ellen, of course) against losing my heart, which young people were apt to do before they knew what they were about; and also against trifling with the feelings of poor girls, and entangling them into engagements which could not, by any possibility, come to anything but disappointment and sorrow.

I understood it all very well; but, like a coward, I put in "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am," at their proper places, till my dear adviser had nothing more to say, or till the vicar came to the rescue—I forget now which it was; and then, my visit having lasted long enough, I walked off, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy," till I reached home again.

Dear Miles, I know what you will say—that I am tormenting myself without cause—that, with your father and mother to

stand by me, and with Mrs. Murray's partiality to me, and with Ellen herself, to say the least of it, not indisposed to smile kindly upon me—I have no occasion to be down-hearted. I have said all this to myself a hundred times; but—yes, there is a “but;” but I think again of the misfortunes of my earlier years, of my wretched origin, of the disgrace which, in spite of all the unexampled kindness I have received, will ever cling to me wherever I am known; and, thinking of all this, I ask myself what right I have to—to——

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### CHAPTER III.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME: IN CONTINUATION.

I BROKE off abruptly yesterday: now I begin again. We—that is, your father and I—posted from “The Oaks” to Portsmouth, and were three days on the road, though we travelled as fast as four horses could drag us along; but the roads were vile. I shall pass over the journey, however, in which nothing particular occurred, and put myself down at once in Portsmouth.

Of course the squire put up at one of the best hotels; and the first thing he did after we had dined was to inquire of the waiter if he knew anything of Captain Maxwell of “The Glorious.”

“Know the captain, sir? Yes, sir. In the house at this present time, sir,” said the waiter, with a smirk and a grin.

“That’s lucky,” said the squire. “Could you take a message to him now, do you think?”

The waiter thought he could; and he did. And presently the door opened again, and in stalked an officer in uniform—a tall, stout man, dark-complexioned, with bright black eyes,

powdered hair, and a projecting under-jaw. Not a handsome specimen, exactly; and I began to hope that he wasn't Captain Maxwell, especially as he seemed to be not quite sober—though I might have been mistaken in this.

But Captain Maxwell he was: and he eyed me pretty keenly when the squire, after apologising for the liberty he had taken, introduced me to his notice. He shook hands with me, however, and told me I was expected; and then it did not require much persuasion on the squire's part to induce him to draw up to the table and fill his glass.

He filled a good many glasses before he went away, and emptied them too, was very friendly with the squire, and patted me on the head so often and so hard, that I began to wish he wouldn't be so uncommonly fond of me. The squire was pleased, however, that I was taken so much notice of, and when the captain took his leave—which was not until he had taken the lion's share of three bottles of port—he congratulated me on having made such good headway.

"Don't you think the captain is rather——" I hesitated for a word, for I did not like to say intoxicated. The squire understood me.

"Rather unsteady on the legs, you were about to observe, Willy. I noticed that myself, my dear boy, as the captain went out of the room. But that's always the case with sailors when on shore: they always roll, as if the ground was not firm beneath their feet."

I rather wondered where your good father had picked up this piece of information; and I wondered more whether I should attain the habit of rolling about in the same way. But I was willing enough to be persuaded that the captain was perfectly sober; so I said nothing.

As the captain had promised that he would send Mr. Raven,

the second lieutenant, for me the next day, and had requested that I should be in the way when he came, we did not leave the hotel; and about mid-day Mr. Raven was announced—a little, sharp, springy man, with cold blue eyes, and hair the colour of boiled parsnips, with whiskers that would have matched if they hadn't been closely shaved.

"Well, to be sure!" said the little man, giving one of my trunks a kick, and pointing to the rest, "what is the youngster going to do with all this rubbish?"

"Take it on board," said the squire, rather gruffly; for (as he told me afterwards) he considered this officer to be a jackanapes and a jack-in-office.

"Not if I know it," said Mr. Raven. And then the squire got warm, and the lieutenant got warm too, and both fell to arguing the matter with great volubility; but the sailor got the better of it, seeing that the power was on his side; and the end of it was, as I have already told you, about two-thirds of my outfit was ignominiously condemned to go back again to Oakley, packed on the post-chaise which had brought us to Portsmouth. After this, the squire good-naturedly shook hands with the lieutenant, and told him that he was evidently a good fellow, who knew how to do his duty, without fear or favour. "Not that I cared a bit about the monkey," said he to me afterwards; "but it would not do to make an enemy for you, Willy, at starting." And as a pledge of restored amity, he invited the officer to drink with him, which he was willing enough to do; and after this, under Mr. Raven's guidance we walked out to a certain outfitter, where I was rigged with a middy's uniform, true blue, and wonderfully fine, and shining with gilt buttons. And then, there being nothing more to be done, we returned to the hotel and ordered up dinner, of which Mr. Raven was kind enough to help us to partake. Finally—with a porter to carry

my diminished luggage—we walked down to the harbour, where I parted from your father and my kind protector, and then tumbled into the boat which was to convey me to my ship.

“My ship!”

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## CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME: IN CONTINUATION.

‘**S**HOW this youngster his berth, Mr. Russell,” said Mr. Raven to a dirty-looking youth, after I had with some difficulty, and a pair of broken shins, scrambled on to the deck of “The Glorious,” and was staring on the novelties around—masts, shrouds, cordage, guns, and all the rest of the strange things that met my wondering eyes, while I could see that I was, in turn, an object of curiosity, mingled with no little degree of contempt, to a knot of lads and young men on deck, among whom was the Mr. Russell to whose care I was committed.

“Ay, ay, sir,” said Mr. Russell, touching his cap, which I began to notice was like my own: his jacket was like mine too, only that his cap and jacket both were, as I have said, indisputably dirty (not to say filthy), and mine were bran new. This, and the mister tacked to his name, convinced me that he and his slovenly-looking companions were midshipmen, as I myself was a midshipman: and this was the first rude shock given to my preconceived notions. I was soon to have other shocks.

“Now, then, Mr. ——” said my guide, superciliously enough, when the lieutenant had walked away. “Mr. —— what’s your name, though?”

“Franklin,” said I.

"Franklin, eh? Any relation to Ben Franklin the printer, out there?"

Presuming the "out there" to mean America, I replied "No." And Mr. Russell rejoined, "Oh!"

By this time we had reached a hatchway, down which my guide dived, ordering me to follow, which I did, then down another ladder—then through an intricate maze, which I felt rather than saw—then into a dark hole, dimly lighted at that time by a single tallow-candle, which Mr. Russell informed me was our berth.

I cannot describe this place to you, Miles, better than by asking you to imagine a big wooden box with the lid on, down the centre of which box, imagine a deal table, about two feet broad, to be fixed; and on each side of the said box a range of chests, serving the double purpose of seats and receptacles for the personal property of the sitters. In the beams above, which are barely six feet from the floor beneath, you may fancy a range of iron hooks, the use of which I could not at first divine, but which I soon discovered were intended for the slinging of hammocks.

I had scarcely time to notice what I have attempted in a few words to describe, and also that two or three pair of eyes, from previous occupants of the den, were fastened upon me, when a sharp tweak, administered to a tender and fleshy part of my arm, giving me for the moment intolerable pain, and leaving a black mark which lasted for a week, caused me to start forward with mingled astonishment and anger, and with so much impetuosity that I stumbled over an invisible pair of legs, and found myself at full length on the floor, with a bruise on my head, which had come in contact with the corner of a chest. I was soon on my legs again however, and, turning to the quarter whence the assault had come, I dimly perceived my treacherous guide

gliding out of the cabin. I lost no time in following him ; but before I could reach the entrance the fellow had vanished, and I heard behind me loud laughter, and shouts of " A chase ! a chase ! "

This was no promising introduction to the middies' mess, was it, Miles ? Fortunately, however, I am not—at least, I flatter myself I am not—naturally pugnacious ; and before I had groped my way to the deck again my temper had so far cooled down as to give me time to reflect what a sorry figure I should cut by inaugurating my new life with a quarrel.

I found Mr. Russell on deck, looking very innocent.

" You will excuse my leaving you so abruptly," said he.

I begged him not to mention it, and asked him to favour me with an introduction to my future messmates. The fellow stared ; but he complied with my request ; and—" though I say it, as shouldn't say it"—I think I managed, Miles, to make them like me, and to find out, on my part, that they did not seem such bad fellows after all—not even Russell (I beg his pardon, *Mr.* Russell), though I was still smarting from his indignity. But I had not forgotten it, nor my revenge either.

It was about five o'clock when I first boarded " The Glorious ; " and at eight I found myself once more in the big box, with a dozen messmates, closely wedged along and on either side of the narrow table. It was supper time ; and we were eating and drinking. But, oh, Miles, such eating and such drinking ! I won't attempt to describe it ; but I can honestly say, comparing my dinner a few hours before with that supper, that I was not—to use the squire's words—let down softly. Very far from it.

There were two candles burning on the table at this time, and by their guttering light it was just possible to penetrate the gloom from one extremity of the box to the other ; and among



the faces glaring around me I distinguished that of my friend Mr. Russell, who was seated next to me. Of what followed I can give you no particular account; but you may guess when I tell you that, any time within the next week, I should have been ashamed to show my face at "The Oaks;" and that for three days Mr. Russell reported himself on the sick list. We are capital friends now, however.

Hurra! our sailing orders have arrived, though our destination, of course, is not known. No more time for scribbling now; for they tell me that to the day and hour of our departure our ship will be a very Babel of confusion. When I can write again, I will. Meanwhile I am, dear Miles, ever yours.

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## CHAPTER V.

### CONJUGAL—THE VICARAGE OF OAKLEY—A CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION.

**W**E have now to introduce our readers to Oakley Vicarage. Partly by the lapse of time, and partly by the exercise of good taste, the modest dwelling had attained an appearance of picturesque beauty (attractiveness would, perhaps, be the better word), which is often wanting in country houses of a more ambitious class. The irregular character of the edifice, its low walls and high-gabled roof and dormer windows, though positively ugly in themselves, in an architectural sense, were rendered charming by their adjuncts and surroundings. Moss-grown and ivy-covered in parts, sheltered and half-concealed by thick and luxuriant shrubs in other parts, flanked by a delicious conservatory towards the south, and fronted by a close-shaven sloping lawn, dotted with flower-beds, on to which a modern

French-window opened from the one tiny drawing-room, the vicarage was the envy of half the neighbourhood around.

The presiding genius of this pleasant and tasteful home was, and had been for the sixth part of a century, Mrs. Murray, the vicar's wife. Under her auspices, the ivy had been planted to cover bare walls, the shrubs laid out, to screen from easterly and northerly winds. It was Mrs. Murray who had hinted to the squire that the conservatory and the French sashes would be a vast improvement to the property, and a pleasant object at the entrance of Oakley Park: and forthwith the conservatory arose, and the ugly old thick-framed casement disappeared. In like manner it was the vicar's wife who had made that the front which was formerly the side of the house; demolished the cabbage garden, which, however useful, could scarcely be considered ornamental, and replaced it with the smooth green lawn. Finally, it was this same lady who had trained with her own hand the roses and honeysuckles which overgrew a pretty rustic summer-house at the extremity of the lawn, under the shade of which she now sat by her husband's side.

The time indicated by the above convenient "now," was the afternoon of the day succeeding Willy Franklin's departure. A word or two more before we report a few scraps of the dialogue, which "a bird of the air," for want of a better medium, may have committed to our pen. The vicar's wife was a stout and comely dame, with a wholesome, genial expression of countenance, which was in itself a pledge for her husband's comfort; and at the same time, with a firm and steady and straightforward habitual use of a pair of handsome grey eyes, which said as plainly as eyes can speak, that their mistress had a way and a will of her own. Everybody knew this, and she knew it herself; but the lady did her spiriting gently, and it entered no one's head to pity the vicar for having a wilful spouse. On the

contrary, it was said to be a fortunate circumstance that the Rev. Alfred Murray had a help-meet so efficient as to take upon her own shoulders pretty nearly the whole weight of all sublunary matters.

For Alfred Murray had been known in his younger days as more of a dreamer than a worker; and the studious habits he had acquired in a quiet and blameless college life had not tended to increase his fitness for the every-day world. Moreover, Mr. Murray had his sermons to study; and though they were neither very long nor very profound, sermon-making was a part, at least, of his proper business; and when a man is composing sermons he cannot very well be troubled, or, at any rate, he does not like to be troubled, with matters which bring down his thoughts from things spiritual to things carnal. In a word, Mr. Murray's proper sphere was supposed to be confined to his pretty little study within-doors, and to his reading-desk, pulpit, and parish without.

He was a gentle-looking man, quiet and unassuming, with a slight stoop in his shoulders that diminished his apparent height, which was near upon six feet. He had uncertain, wandering, mildly-beaming eyes, partly concealed behind the spectacles which long and close reading had compelled him to adopt; and his voice was more persuasive than powerful.

Said the lady, for a moment discontinuing the knitting, which, with true housewifely notions of the value of time, she had generally at hand to occupy her spare moments, "It is a great relief to my mind, Alfred."

As this was said *à propos* to nothing, the vicar looked up, and meekly responded, "A great relief, my dear?"

"This sending off young Franklin to sea, I mean," said the wife.

"I don't know," rejoined the husband, slowly. "I hope it may be a good thing for him; and then we may become

reconciled to the young man's absence : but as to a relief—why a relief, Isabel ? ”

“ Because of Ellen,” replied the lady, coming to the point at once, as she was wont to do.

“ A relief ! and because of Ellen, my love ? ” continued the husband, echoing his wife's words, as, when he was puzzled, he was wont to do.

“ Young people are so foolish,” resumed Mrs. Murray, in a tone of vexation, and apparently pursuing her own thoughts.

“ My dear, if we could put old heads upon young shoulders, I am not sure that the world would be any better for it : but Ellen, poor child, what has she done ? ”

“ There, Alfred, you don't understand me, I see. I did not say that Ellen had done anything. I was only observing that it is a good thing altogether that Franklin has left ‘ The Oaks.’ I am sure I wish him no harm.”

“ I should think not, Isabel. Poor lad ! I never in my life met a young man of more promise, nor of a more amiable disposition. Wish him harm ! No, my love ; it would be foreign from your nature to wish any one harm. What can have put such an idea into your head ? ”

“ My dear, no one has put the idea into my head. But, don't you see, Franklin's absence will necessarily break off his intimacy with Ellen ? ”

“ Ah, dear girl ! Ellen will miss her young companion as much as any of us, I dare say. And, by the way, my love,” said the vicar, with sudden briskness, “ I meant to speak about it before, but it somehow slipped out of my head—I was rather troubled last night.”

The lady fixed her eyes very stedfastly on her husband, which discomposed him ; but he went on apologetically : “ I am sure, my love, you did not intend to——”

"To disappoint young Franklin ; you need not go on, Alfred. I know very well what you are going to say ; but you are mistaken : I did intend to disappoint him."

Mr. Murray lifted up his eyebrows.

"And I intended he should see that I intended to disappoint him ; that is to say, I intended he should see that Ellen was sent out of his way."

"Such companions as they have been from childhood, my dear——"

"And you would have no objection to their being companions for life, I suppose, Alfred. But for my part——"

"Companions for life, Isabel ? My love, I am sure I do not understand you."

"When a woman marries," said Mrs. Murray, composedly resuming her knitting, "she generally becomes her husband's companion for life, I think."

"No doubt, my love. From the beginning it was so : but (*a gleam of intelligence darting in upon his mind*) you do not surely mean—why, Isabel, William Franklin is a mere boy ; and Ellen—my dear love—why, Ellen is a child."

"That is just what my father said, twenty-five years ago. Don't you remember, Alfred ?"

"Ours was an exceptional case, my dear ; and it proves nothing. Besides, Isabel, you were a woman—comparatively a woman, though your father did speak in such derogatory terms."

"I was just eighteen, Alfred."

"No more than that ? I suppose not, though ; but Ellen——"

"Ellen is seventeen, dear."

"I am astonished to hear you say so. Seventeen ! (*Deeply reflective.*) It must be so, I suppose, now I think of it. (*Tenderly.*) My dear wife, the time has passed away very rapidly—and very happily."



THE VICAR BEGINS TO SEE WHAT HIS WIFE IS DRIVING AT.



The lady was moved by the tones of her husband's voice, and the look of affection which accompanied it. She once more laid down her knitting, and, placing her hand gently in his, she said, "We have been very happy, Alfred; and it would be sad, would it not, if any indiscretion on the part of our dear girl were to mar that happiness at last?"

"Sad, truly, Isabel," ejaculated the bewildered vicar; "but——"

"And there is, or at least there has been, danger of it, Alfred," continued Mrs. Murray. "I always thought it was Quixotic, in the highest degree, in the squire to make so much of that unfortunate boy, and put him on an equality with his own son; but he chose to do it, and Mrs. Oakley chose it too, and it was their business. And all the while the two boys were children it did not signify to anybody else; but the mischief began, Alfred, when you were persuaded to undertake their education."

"My dear Isabel, let me try to understand you."

"I am trying to make you understand, Alfred. It was that unlucky arrangement that threw the young people together. The two boys could not come here from day to day without becoming familiar with Ellen; and that did not so much matter while the boys were boys, and she only a child; but——"

"But, my dearest wife, I—I really thought—I may be mistaken, I know—but I did really think that this familiarity did not displease you."

"Well, to tell you the truth, Alfred, I made up my mind to let things take their course, and to say nothing. How could I suppose that Ellen could be so extremely foolish?"

"I am shockingly dull, I know, Isabel; but do you really mean to say that our dear girl has—has committed herself to an



engagement with William Franklin?" asked the vicar, upon whom some impression began to be made.

"Would it trouble you very much if that were the case, Alfred?" asked the lady.

"My dear love, I had never once thought of the possibility of such a thing. Would it trouble me?—why, yes. The poor lad cannot help the unfortunate circumstances which placed him under Mr. Oakley's protection; but—yes, I confess it would trouble me not a little. The lad is a fine lad; and his prospects are bright—brighter than mine were at his age, Isabel; and I hope we are neither of us so foolish and worldly-minded as to make mere birth and high connections an object, especially as we have nothing in this respect to boast of ourselves; but, looking at the unhappy accidents of Franklin's earlier years, and his miserable parentage—well, Isabel, it would trouble me."

"I knew you would feel so, Alfred; and so, I say again, it is a great relief to my mind that the young man has fairly left Oakley." And then the lady went on to say how she had detected a young attachment springing up, and had vainly striven to nip it in the bud, when the opportune departure of the young sailor lightened her mind of its load, and inspired hopes that absence would bring about a perfect cure.

"There is no great harm done at present, I hope," said she; "and as it will be two or three years before another meeting is likely to take place, we may hope that the danger is over. Ellen will be wiser then, and—and other circumstances may have arisen."

The vicar's wife did not say what circumstances; and perhaps she could scarcely have explained the nature of her expectations and desires; but as her conversation almost immediately afterwards led to a calculation of the annual value of the Oakley estate, and the brilliant prospects of the young heir, we shall do

the good lady no injustice in believing that if Ellen's preference had been manifestly shown for her father's more fortunate pupil, things would, as Mrs. Murray said, have been allowed to take their course. We may also believe that she had not yet entirely dismissed from her mind the possible event of seeing in her daughter the future mistress of "The Oaks," when she hinted at other circumstances, and Ellen's ripened wisdom.

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## CHAPTER VI.

ON BOARD "THE GLORIOUS"—EXPERIENCES OF A MIDDY—HOW THE NAVAL SERVICE WAS RECRUITED IN OLD TIMES.

IN "the good old times" of which our story treats, the navy was a sufficiently hard service. With some exceptions, the superior officers were tyrants, the common sailors little better than slaves, kept in subjection mainly by the terror of the lash; and a midshipman was considered "a kind of water-dog, intended to fetch and carry."

"The Glorious," in which we have started Willy Franklin, was no exception to the general rule; and as, for various sufficient reasons, we intend that he shall narrate his own adventures, we re-introduce him some weeks later than the date of his first despatches:—

Don't think, dear Miles (he writes), that I have forgotten my promise to write long and often; but it is easier to promise than to perform; and if months *have* passed away since my former epistle, I cannot help it. You have never been in a midshipman's berth: I have.

Well, never mind; I haven't any time for botherations; and I should not be writing now, only word has been passed that

the captain will be sending home despatches some of these days, and that he will graciously permit a little bag to be made up to accompany them. So here goes.

"How do I like being a sailor?" Why, truly, to answer you after the manner of Clown Touchstone, in respect of itself, a sailor's life is a good life; but in respect that it is a sailor's life, it is naught. In respect that it is not solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is not private, it is a very vile life. In respect that it is on the sea, it pleaseth me well; but in respect that it is not on land, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach.

There, dear Miles, your question is answered. Hast any philosophy in thee?

In sober prose, however, I am very well contented with my choice. I did not expect to be idle, and I am not; to feed on delicacies, and I do not; to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and I am not. If I were Miles Oakley, I would not be a sailor; but being William Franklin, I would and will be.

I looked at your letter again, Miles; and your questions tumble in upon me thick and threefold. If I were to attempt to answer half of them, you would have to wait a long time for my letter; so you must be satisfied with the best I can give you.

Our whole crew, then, numbers somewhere about four hundred men. We have a captain, of whom I informed you before; three lieutenants—first, second, and third—of whom I may have something to say hereafter; a sailing-master, a doctor, a purser, an assistant-surgeon, and a clerk; a dozen middies; a gunner, a boatswain, and a carpenter; add to these, two or three score of marines, with their captain and his lieutenant. Deduct these and the officers from the number I have written

down, and you have something over three hundred men and boys to work the frigate.

“What sort of beings are they?” Why, speaking generally, I should say that they are a set of about the biggest rogues unhung, if I were not assured that we should come out favourably in that respect, compared with other ships’ crews.\* More particularly, however, I may describe these precious fellows as composed of a slight sprinkling of able seamen of decent character, who, having been brought up to the service from their boyhood, could not quit it if they would, and perhaps would not if they could. These men know their duty, and are not averse from doing it. Another portion of the crew consists of sailors who, having been entrapped, or forcibly seized upon, or snapped up by the press-gangs, are compelled to serve their country, whether they like it or not. As you may suppose, these fellows are, for the most part, sullen and desperate, and are only kept in check by dread of punishment. A third portion of the crew is made up of scourings of jails—smugglers, poachers, and pickpockets; you may guess what sort of sailors these are likely to make.

And before I get away from this subject, I will tell you of a scene I witnessed soon after we left port, and while we were beating off and on the Isle of Wight, with a contrary wind. I must tell you first of all, though, that the frigate was then, and is now, short of her full complement of men, although her press-gangs had been active enough while she lay in harbour. In consequence of this, or from some other cause, our captain was in no very amiable mood; and the officers, as was natural enough, followed his example—in point of temper, I mean.

\* This sweeping denunciation must be taken *cum grano salis*, and set down as the random expression of the earlier impressions of a free-spoken youth, who says the first thing that comes to hand without modification or qualification. We shall see as he goes on that his opinions considerably change.

"Well, we were off the coast, as I have told you, when a stout brig was seen coming round a point, at about a mile's distance, with all her sails set, and steering up the channel. It did not take long to make out that she was a trading vessel, and also that as soon as those on board caught sight of "The Glorious," her course was altered, so as to avoid a too intimate acquaintance with us. But it was too late; and when the distance between the two vessels was diminished to about half a mile, a shot from the frigate across the bow of the brig caused her speedily to hoist up English colours, but at the same time to crowd on all her canvas, with an evident intention of making her escape if she could. This was a mistake on her part, however; for another shot from our frigate, which rattled among her sticks, and wrought some little damage to her top gear, showed that we were in earnest, and caused her to be hove to.

In the meantime, a couple of our boats had been lowered, and, each containing more than a dozen men, pulled off steadily towards the brig. In one of these, which was under the command of Mr. Grey, the third lieutenant, I found myself, without having any distinct idea how I got there, or being there, what I was to do; though, on looking round on the men, I could see that they were prepared for rough work, for naked cutlasses and pistols were ominously glittering in the sunshine.

"Pull away with a will, boys!" shouted Mr. Grey; and our boat sprang forward under the impetus of the oars, like a thing of life, the other boat following close in our wake. We were soon within hail of the brig; and then Mr. Grey, ordering his men to rest on their oars, stood up in the stern-sheets.

"Brig-a-hoy!" shouted he, so sharp and loud, and unexpectedly, as far as I was concerned, that it made me start.

"Boat-a-hoy!" returned the captain of the brig, from the

deck. The brig, I should explain, was making very little way now.

"What brig?" demanded the king's lieutenant.

"*'The Dorothy,'* of London, homeward bound from New York," replied the hoarse tones of the brig's skipper, and tacking on a counter-interrogation, in a voice of bravado, as it seemed to me.

"His Majesty's frigate, *'The Glorious,'*" retorted Mr. Grey, proudly; adding, "Why didn't you heave to when you had the signal?"

The captain of the brig made some reply to this, which I could not catch, but which seemed to irritate our lieutenant, who, without further parley, ordered his crew to move alongside the brig; in which manœuvre he was closely followed by the second boat. He then signified his intention of boarding the brig and overhauling her papers. At the same time, it was not difficult even for me, novice as I was, to guess that something more formidable and less pacific than the examination of papers was anticipated; for, at a glance from the leader, every man stealthily and silently laid his hand on a cutlass, and stuck a brace of pistols into his belt.

Not so silently and stealthily, however, that the movement was not noticed by the captain of the brig; for he hastily and roughly demanded if he were taken for a pirate or a smuggler.

Up to this time no man except the captain had been visible on the deck of the brig, so that it might almost have seemed that he was sailing his vessel single-handed; but at this moment about a dozen rough-looking fellows, who had evidently been crouching behind the bulwarks, now suddenly sprang into sight, armed, some with pikes and some with spars, and evidently determined to dispute an entrance into the brig. This was all a mystery to me then; but it was soon explained. The

poor fellows had reason enough for endeavouring to avoid, though they might not have been so wise in attempting to resist, a domiciliary visit from a king's officer, with two boats' crews at his back.

The threatened resistance did not, however, take our officer by surprise, nor did it greatly trouble him. In fact, he laughed good-naturedly (he is a good-tempered fellow, Mr. Grey), and, speaking in an admonitory tone to the skipper, who stood with his arms folded, as though he had no concern in the matter, warned him of the consequences, both to himself and his men, if any mischief should ensue. He then gave orders to our sailors to board.

But this order was more easily given than carried out. The sides of the brig were tolerably high, and wall-sided as well, which rendered an ascent difficult enough, seeing that everything which might aid a man in the attempt had been carefully hauled on board; and seeing also that over the heads of the climbers were brandished a number of ugly-looking weapons, by a number of equally ugly-looking men, who indulged us with formidable threats, not unmingled with oaths and curses.

The fellows were outnumbered, however, especially when our other boat slipped round to the other side of the brig, thus dividing the forces opposed to us; and though one or two of our men were tumbled back into the boat bleeding, and *hors de combat*, a struggle of three minutes' duration, without a pistol fired, saw Mr. Grey and his men triumphantly treading the deck, sword in hand, while the brig's crew had ignominiously taken to flight, some below-deck, and some in the rigging.

I should tell you, Miles, that I took no share in this skirmish, Mr. Grey having ordered me to the stern-sheets, to take care of the boat, in company with one man at the oars, and the two fellows who were wounded.

"Extraordinary conduct this, to a king's officer," I heard Mr. Grey say to the skipper, who, still with his arms folded, had looked on quietly while the boarding was effected.

"Extraordinary conduct *in* a king's officer," I heard the captain retort, "to come armed against a peaceable trader in this fashion: but might overcomes right; only I call you to witness, sir, that *I* made no resistance to your boarding; and I reckon, if you had been in my place, you wouldn't have done less."

What more passed I did not hear; for the lieutenant directly accompanied the captain below, to look at the brig's papers. As this, under the circumstances, was a mere form, it did not take long; and the next thing I heard Mr. Grey say, was on their returning to deck—

"You have a fine set of men, captain: more than you want to carry your brig up channel."

"Not a man too many, sir," said the skipper, promptly.

"For all that, I must take the liberty of going snacks with you, captain," retorted the lieutenant, laughing. "Come, be reasonable, and we will share and share alike," he added.

Oh, oh! thought I; I understand it all now; we are sweeping the sea with a long broom. In other words, Miles, we were a press-gang afloat.

"There are the men," said the skipper, grimly; "you have the power, and you must do your will."

"I mean to do it," I heard Mr. Grey say; and then he shouted to the brig's crew to come aft.

But they minded the lieutenant no more than they would have minded me, Miles.

Mr. Grey then said something else: what it was I did not hear; but in a moment our men were swarming over the brig in full chase of the crew. There was no chance for the poor fellows, of course, outnumbered as they were, to say nothing of



their inferiority in arms: but they held their own gallantly too; and, to tell the truth, I was sorry to see, after a little while, that they were overpowered and driven together on deck, at the mercy of the captors, some of them bleeding from cutlass strokes, and two of them apparently seriously wounded. Nor had our men come off entirely free, for some half-dozen of them were bleeding too, and were so savage that it was with difficulty they were restrained by the lieutenant from dashing in among the prisoners and giving them a few more slashes. They were restrained, however.

"You rascals," said Mr. Grey, "you have given me a deal of unnecessary trouble; and it would serve you right—and you too," (turning to the skipper,) "if I were to pack you all off to yonder frigate; but I will be merciful. There are a dozen of you altogether. With six men, captain, you can very well beat into port; the other six are mine. Who volunteers to serve the king?"

This being something like the cook's invitation to the ducks, "Dilly, dilly, come and be killed," there was no reply from the men, who stood huddled together like a flock of sheep, but scowling ferociously, as sheep would not have done, while the blood, trickling down their bronzed faces and bedabbling their naked arms, added ghastliness to ferocity.

"If you won't volunteer I must *press* you, my men, that's all," said our lieutenant; and without further ceremony he picked out half-a-dozen of the strongest-looking of the prisoners, and ordered them into the boats—three in each. The men sullenly obeyed, for further resistance on their part would have been madness; and our men, tumbling over the brig's side after them, the deck was left clear. The lieutenant then, after politely lifting his hat and wishing the captain of "The Dorothy" and his diminished crew a safe and speedy fag-end to their voyage, gave the word, and we pulled back towards the frigate.

## CHAPTER VII.

RICHARD ADAMS, THE PRESSED MAN—WILLY FRANKLIN'S STORY  
OF A FORMER MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE.

OUR three prisoners (for so I may term the pressed sailors) had not been long in the boat before it was seen that one of them was faint from the wounds he had received in the skirmish. Of course there had been no intention on the part of our sailors seriously to injure the men ; but cutlasses are queer things to play with at any time ; and the man in question had offered such stubborn resistance, that our fellows had been compelled to be rough with him. The poor fellow was bleeding sadly from a cut across his hand, and a ghastly-looking slash over his left temple, which had partly laid his scalp bare. The pain must have been great, from the exposure of the wounds to the cold air ; but the poor wretch suffered silently, till, as I said, he fainted from loss of blood.

It happened that I was seated close behind this prisoner, and as he sank his head fell upon my knee. I can tell you, Miles, I felt queer ; for, to say nothing of the effect on the nerves and stomach, of seeing human blood shed, for almost the first time in one's life, I really believed the man to be dead or dying. It was horrible.

"Hallo, Mr. Franklin, what's the matter ?" shouted Mr. Grey, as he witnessed the change in my countenance.

The exclamation seemed to rouse the wounded man for a second or two ; for he gave a violent and sudden start, and, opening his eyes, gazed around wildly, and, as it appeared to me, almost in terror. At least I never saw more terror expressed than his countenance betrayed for a single moment. The look soon passed away, however, and the poor fellow,

relapsed into insensibility. Meanwhile, I fancy I had recovered some degree of self-possession—at any rate, I made a strong effort to gulp down my tender feelings, and, whipping out a handkerchief, I busied myself in binding up the man's head; and happening fortunately to have a second handkerchief in another pocket, I wound it round his hand.

The lieutenant gave me an approving look, which did me good; and at the same time he handed me a flask from his pocket. "Take a mouthful yourself, youngster," said he, "and then give him a dose of it if he can swallow it."

I obeyed; the cordial was good strong cognac, which took my breath away, though I don't think I swallowed a tea-spoonful. Then I put it to the man's white lips, which were partly open. I rather think my hand shook a little; for more of the stuff went into his throat than I had bargained for, and it nearly choked him. There was a laugh at my expense.

It did good, though; for the colour came back to the poor fellow's lips, and he opened his eyes. He tried to speak too, but did not succeed. Then he attempted to raise himself; but he fell back again, and there he lay with his head on my knee, till we reached the frigate.

This is a long story about nothing particular; but it being my first active service makes me think of it. It will soon be put out of my head by newer adventures, I dare say. But the wounded man—well, he looked so gratefully up at me when he came to himself, and discovered where his head had been resting, that I could not help asking myself, Miles, what business he had to be wounded at all?

Well—to finish my story of this affair—the pressed men were taken down to the hospital to have their wounds dressed, and they were kept under guard for two or three days—my man for a week, his wounds being more serious than those of the rest.

At last he was pronounced fit for duty too ; and by this time the other fellows were pretty well reconciled to their fate.

"I say, Franklin," said Russell to me one day, when we, for want of something better to do, were skylarking on deck, "that fellow means to know you when he sees you again."

"What fellow?" I wanted to know ; for there were a good many hands on deck.

"Why, that 'Dorothy' man, what's his name?—Adams—Dick Adams."

I turned round, and saw that Adams, who was half leaning over one of the guns, was eyeing me in a kind of abstracted manner, but earnestly enough ; but the moment he saw I was looking at him, he withdrew his gaze and half turned towards the sea. It occurred to me then that I had not spoken to the man since he left the hospital, and that I might as well congratulate him on the healing of his wounds. I walked up to him, therefore.

"I am glad to see you have got out of the surgeon's hands, Adams," said I.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the sailor, "I am all right now."

"It was an ugly crack of the head you got, however ; and your hand is tender yet, I am afraid." In fact, I saw that the back of his hand was yet bound up with adhesive plaster.

The man laughed, and again remarked that it was all right now.

"I am sorry, however, for your misfortune," I said.

"Thank you, sir, for your sympathy," returned Adams, (by the way, I could not help observing that his words and manner were both superior to those of the common run of sailors ;) "but I don't know that I care much for the misfortune, as you are good enough to call it. One ship is as good as another to me."

"You did not seem to think so when you were pressed, though," said I.

"And I didn't," said he, promptly. "Who would like to have his liberty taken from him, sir, and to be hunted like a rat into a hole? Why, a rat itself would stand at bay then."

"At any rate," said I, "I am glad you are reconciled to your fate now."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Adams, hitching up his trowsers in true sailor fashion, and looking me full in the face as he spoke, which he had not done before; "it has been my lot to be knocked about the world a good deal, and if I am not reconciled to it by this time, I suppose I never shall be. But, to tell you the truth, sir," he went on, "now I am here I am not sorry for it, and—but I beg your pardon for being so bold—and I believe this belongs to you."

He took a bandanna handkerchief from his breast, clean washed and neatly folded, and gave it into my hand. It was the handkerchief I had tied round his head.

"Thank you; it is mine, certainly."

"And this too, sir," taking a white lawn handkerchief from the same receptacle; "but I want to ask a favour of you, sir."

"What is it?"

"To let me keep this in remembrance of your kindness and humanity, sir," said the man; "it has got your name marked at the corner, sir"—and so it had, marked by your mother, Miles, in full, *W. Franklin*—"and if you will be so kind, sir," continued Adams, with more huskiness in his voice than the occasion called for, "I'll never part with it—never, as long as I live."

"Keep them both by all means, my good fellow," said I. "I am only glad that I was able to do you a little service that day."

The man looked unutterable thanks as I gave him back the



**"I WILL NEVER PART WITH IT."**



bandanna, and there the conversation ended ; but I could not help pitying the poor fellow from my heart. I don't like the system of *pressing* men to serve, and I believe no one does like it ; but I am told that there's no other way of manning the navy. So it must be, I suppose ; at any rate, *I* can't alter it. But I feel more for this man than for pressed men in general. He is well-behaved, and much better educated than most sailors. There's something in his looks, too, that takes my fancy. He is almost handsome, though he is considerably bronzed and roughened by a sea-life, and his dark hair is plentifully sprinkled with grey ; for, I should tell you, he is not young—probably he is near upon fifty years old ; and this makes his case more pitiable. Pshaw ! you will think I am bewitched if I write any more about this man. So for another subject.

I told you that the last time I was at H. I met with an adventure—not worth calling an adventure, perhaps ; but, now I think of it, I'll write it down here. I was in Mrs. Judkins's new grocery shop in the High Street. (By the way, I have found out accidentally that the old woman may thank your father for her astonishing rise in the world of late years. It is his help and patronage have done it ; and it is like the squire's noble benevolence to do such things in secret ; though, what there is in that old woman to—but that is nothing to the purpose.) Well, I was in Mrs. Judkins's shop, and was being served with a canister of gunpowder (not gunpowder *tea*, of course), when I fancied I perceived a sort of telegraphic communication between her and another elderly female who just before had made her appearance from what I supposed to be Mrs. Judkins's back parlour, and at almost the same time she addressed me by name, as Master Franklin. Directly the words were out of her mouth, the unknown elderly woman darted forward, set herself in front of me, and, clapping her hands



on my shoulders, stared me in the face for the space of half a minute.

"It is he himself," she exclaimed, bursting into tears. I'll give you full permission to laugh, Miles. She had no sooner said this than her arms were round my neck, and she was smothering me with kisses, to say nothing of smearing me with her wet cheeks. I never was more taken aback in all my life especially as there were three or four other customers in the shop, who, I could feel, were grinning at sight of the ridiculous figure I cut.

"Who is that stupid old creature?" I asked Mrs. Judkins, when the other had popped back again and was out of sight. "Is she mad or drunk?"

"Oh," said Mrs. J., "she is a silly old creature. Don't mind her; she does not always know what she is about."

"I hope she will keep her hands off me the next time we meet, however," said I, "and her kisses to herself," I added, wiping my cheeks. "What does she know about me, I should like to know?"

"Oh, nothing, sir, nothing," said Mrs. Judkins; "it is only one of her queer fancies." And that was all I could get out of her.

Well, now I have written it down, it does not seem worth telling, only—only, Miles—but I must leave off scribbling now. More next time.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MORE EXPERIENCES OF A MIDSHIPMAN—SEA-LAWYERS—THE  
PRESSED MAN—A NIGHT-WATCH—"THE RIGHTS OF MAN."

I AM in the starboard watch, commanded by Mr. Grey, the third lieutenant. I have told you something about him before, Miles; and he is not a bad sort of fellow at all—for a lieutenant. But I am not going to write about him now.

A few nights ago I was on deck. It was a magnificent (no, that isn't the word), a glorious night; moon at half-full, stars bright and steady, not a cat's-paw of wind, the sea as smooth and *reflecting* as a looking-glass, all our sails furled, and our frigate motionless.

"Thinking of home, sir?"

I did not know that anybody was near me; for (there being nothing to do) the men of our watch were scattered about in lazy groups on the fore-castle, while the officers were pacing the quarter-deck, and I was leaning over the gunwale alone, looking first up at the stars and then at their pictures, Miles—below the bottom of the sea, as it seemed.

"Thinking of home, sir?"

I turned round, and there was plenty of light to see that the man who spoke to me was Adams, the pressed man I told you about.

I must tell you a little more about him, for he is a singular man, and somehow or other he has strangely obtained an ascendancy in my thoughts. He gets talked about too, in our mess, and higher up as well, as a "sea-lawyer." You don't know what that means, so I must explain. When a man before the mast has a better-stocked knowledge-box than common—

especially if he happen to have the gift of the gab—he is called by this name. In general, the officers have a strong prejudice against sea-lawyers; and not without reason, for they are rare hands at finding out grievances and stirring up discontent. The fact is, they know too much for their station, and are aware of this. Consequently, they are dissatisfied with it; and as there is not much chance of rising above it, they are always on the growl. If there is any grumbling on board ship, you may be pretty sure that a sea-lawyer is at the bottom of it. Add to this, these fellows are by no means the best sailors. In nine cases out of ten, perhaps, they have entered the service by some back door or other. Some of them are scamps, who have tried lots of things besides, and have been unsuccessful in all, for want of steadiness; others have been sent to sea by their friends, to get them out of the way of mischief, or very likely to save them from prison and the gallows; and others have actually been raked out of gaols, and would be sure to be shovelled in again if allowed to get loose. You need not wonder, therefore, that when a man gets the name of a sea-lawyer he is not looked upon with much favour. Yet they are plucky fellows when there is anything desperate to be done; for most of them have good blood in them, and this carries them through.

All this, and more, I was told by Mr. Grey, one night on watch, when we were talking about this man Adams.

I should tell you, however, that Adams is an exception to the general rule; for, in spite of the gross injustice, as I must call it, and the masterly violence by which he was robbed of his liberty, he has never opened his mouth to a grumble, and the influence of his example and his tongue has been beneficial, so far as it has extended. Whether he has been a sailor all his life, from boyhood, is a question, however. He might solve it

if he would; but it seems that he does not choose to talk about himself; and there is an air about him at times, which Mr. Grey says proves the contrary.

If you ask me why I write so much about this Richard Adams, I can only say that it is because he comes into my mind. I think I am more interested in him than in any one else on board "*The Glorious*;" and this is natural enough, because the poor fellow is never tired of showing his gratitude to me, in a hundred little ways, for the compassion I could not help feeling for him, and the slight attentions I paid him when he was wounded.

So, when Adams appeared at my elbow, and asked me if I were thinking about home, I readily enough answered that I was; which was true, for I had been thinking about Oakley, and in particular about one bright moonlight night, which perhaps you may remember.

"Oh," said the sailor, "you are at a happy age, Mr. Franklin, when thoughts of home are always welcome. You have a happy home in England, no doubt, sir."

"Yes," said I, "and very kind friends; and, as you say, thoughts of home are always welcome."

Adams was silent for a minute or two, and took a turn on deck; but he stopped when he came near me again. "Kind friends, Mr. Franklin?—brothers and sisters, perhaps."

I thought of you, Miles, and of—well, yes, of Ellen; and I had nearly said, "One of each," which would have been true in one sense; I stopped short of this, however, and said, "No, I had neither sister nor brother."

"It must have been a great trial to your parents, parting with you, then, Mr. Franklin," said Adams, in a kind of sorrowful tone, which made me think that he had known in his time what such a parting was.

But the question touched me on the raw; and I could not help wincing inwardly. I answered shortly, therefore, that it would perhaps have been a great trial, if I had happened to have parents; but that I had neither father nor mother.

"What! no mother, Mr. Franklin!" said Adams, with a sort of start, which made me look round upon him. It might have been the moonlight shining full in his face which made him look so death-like; but when he had turned away for a moment, that ghastly look passed away, and he said, in his ordinary tones—

"I beg your pardon, sir; I was thinking of my own home when I was first sent to sea; and I forgot. So your poor mother is dead, then?"

What could I say, Miles? I evaded the question as well as I could. "I lost both my parents, Adams," I said, "when I was quite a child; and the kind friends I told you of are not related to me, though they have been better parents to me than my own would ever have been."

"Don't say so, sir," said the man, hastily; "because you don't know what your own might have been; and, to my way of thinking, no friends, let them be ever so kind, can be equal in all ways to one's own father and mother. But, whoever your friends are, I'll say, 'God bless them,' for your sake." And then he walked away.

I don't suppose I should have remembered this conversation so distinctly, but for a singular thing that happened about an hour afterwards.

Our watch was nearly over, and I was on the quarter-deck with Mr. Grey, when we noticed a slight commotion forward, caused, so we soon learned, by one of the watch suddenly falling down in a fit. The man was Richard Adams; and when we

reached the place, we found him bleeding rather profusely from the mouth, so that he was nearly choking. He was soon carried below; and on examination by the surgeon, it was found that the poor fellow had by some means ruptured a small blood-vessel. It was not of serious consequence, the doctor said; only the man must be kept quiet for a few days, and have plenty of air. Consequently, as the weather was fine and warm, he was brought up, several days in succession, out of the stifling atmosphere of his berth, and lay on a mattress on deck. On one of these days I offered to lend him a book. As ill-luck would have it, among the half-dozen or so of volumes which I had pitched into my chest before leaving "The Oaks," was one of my poor father's books, which had accidentally fallen into my hands some time before, but which I had never read. I knew it had been his, because his name was written on the fly-leaf. As ill-luck again would have it, what book must I snatch out of my berth but this identical one; and fancying, from a glance or two I took at the inside, that Adams would like it well enough, I ran up with it, and put it into his hands.

Three hours afterwards I was sent for by the captain, who was on the quarter-deck. And the moment I saw him, he broke out into a horrible sort of rage, and asked me, with certain blasphemous embellishments, which are better omitted, what I meant by poisoning the minds of his crew with stuff like *that*; and he dashed my poor unfortunate book down on the deck.

I begged his pardon, and humbly submitted that I did not know there was any harm in the book, which, I said truly, I had never read.

I need not tell you what else followed, only that I got a severe wiggling, and was then sent about my business—not till I had picked up my book, though.

"What does the captain mean, Mr. Grey?" I asked afterwards.

"Let me have a look at the book," said he, "and perhaps I can tell you; or if you tell me the title of it, I may be able to give a guess at the cause of the storm."

I put the book into his hand.

"Whew! whew!" whistled Mr. Grey. "'The Rights of Man;' why, do you know what sort of book that is, youngster?"

I told him I did not.

"And had not need," said he. "Take my advice, and throw it over to the fishes."

"Why, sir?"

"Why, you young blockhead, there's sedition enough in that book to stir up a whole ship's crew to mutiny; to say nothing of its being put into the head of a sea-lawyer, like Adams. The rights of man, indeed! It won't do to talk about the rights of man on board ship, Franklin."

I could not make any more out of Mr. Grey; but I thought it better to put the book out of sight. What there is in it I don't know, nor care to know, especially as Adams, when I spoke to him afterwards about it, told me that, from what little he had read of it, before it was taken away from him, he judged there was more harm than good in it; and he should advise me (if he might be so bold) not to read it, if I had not.

Well, this about the book, and the man's sudden illness, fixed our former conversation on my memory. I may as well add that Adams is well enough now; but somehow he keeps more at a distance from me than he used to do.

As I have mentioned Captain Maxwell, I will just add (under the rose) that there's no more patting me on the head and calling me a fine fellow. All that palaver is kept for along-

shore. He is not such a bad fellow either, if he were not a most extraordinary swaggerer, and immensely choleric as well; to say nothing of his being three sheets in the wind eight hours of every twenty-four. But mum about that.

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## CHAPTER IX.

LETTERS FROM HOME—A GALE—A SAIL IN SIGHT—A CHASE—A NIGHT ATTACK BY BOATS—BOARDING AN ENEMY—VICTORY.

YESTERDAY a cutter from Portsmouth joined us, and brought out letters and newspapers, also an order for our frigate to proceed to Gibraltar, which was welcome intelligence to all on board, for we began to get tired of cruising about in these seas, and not a single brush with the enemy. The wind is dead against us at present, however; so another word with you, or two, dear Miles.

Why, what an unconscionable fellow you are! I have not been nine months a sailor, and you expect me to write as learnedly about naval affairs as though I were an Admiral of the Blue. And what would you be the wiser if I should put you through a whole course of sea-terms, and patter to you about bulls'-eyes and sheepshanks, whips and puddings and sheets, catsheads and back-stays, cross-trees and cranks, clew-lines and top-lanterns, shrouds and deadeyes, lanyards and halliards? Shall I go on? I could fill you a page or two, if you liked; but I won't, out of pity to your ignorance; but confess, Miles, that I could puzzle you if I would.

Many thanks for your letter, though, and for the description of your every-day life at Saint Radigunds. It is not for me to turn moralist, Miles; and I am not going to lecture you; only,

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I hope you are quizzing me a little when you tell me of your goings on. Better write such things in fun than practise them in earnest ; and so the squire would say, I think.

Don't think yours was the only letter I received. There was one from the squire, which he had some difficulty in writing, because of the gout ; but the letter was like himself, hearty and generous ; for it inclosed a banker's draft, which he dares say will be useful to me. Another packet was from the vicarage, abounding in good advice from our old teacher ; not a word about Ellen in it, though, and only a short message from Mrs. Murray. I can understand what it means.

But, oh, Miles ! when I opened the next packet, out dropped a note from Ellen herself. The packet was from your kind, dear mother ; and Ellen, who was spending two or three days at "The Oaks," was asked by her if she had no message to send to the young sailor. So, what could she do but comply ? . . . There, I have told you all ; now to turn to other matters.

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It is three days since I left off writing ; and events have taken place which, for a time at least, put everything else out of my head. Looking over what I have previously written, I see that I told you the wind was dead against our proceeding to Gibraltar. In fact, it rose to a gale that same night ; and, in spite of all the manœuvres, which, if you could understand, I cannot now describe, we were driven out of our course, and saw land at a distance, which proved to be the Island of Belleisle. The gale moderated about noon, and we were enabled to haul up our course ; and before evening the wind had shifted.

All sails were then set, to take advantage of the favourable breeze ; and while we were spanking through the water, the mast-head man cried out that a sail was visible right a-head. Suspecting the stranger to be an enemy, the captain gave orders

to crowd all sail; and as pretty a chase commenced as could be desired. We gained upon the vessel, which soon hoisted French colours, and proved to be a gun-brig of the enemy; and we should soon have come up with her if the wind had not rapidly sunk; by eight o'clock it was a dead calm. The vessels were at this time about three miles apart, and very soon they lay like logs upon the water, which still continued rolling from the effects of the gale. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and there was our anticipated prize, yet beyond our reach, and ready to take advantage of the first flaw of wind to escape from us altogether. Of course this was not to be permitted; and orders were given for the boats to be lowered, which order was followed by loud cheers and "hoorays" from the men. Poor fellows! it was the last cheer given by many of them.

Well, Miles, the order was soon obeyed, in spite of the rolling sea, which, however, was gradually subsiding; and I may as well tell you that the boats employed were the launch, the first cutter, and the jolly-boat. My friend Mr. Grey commanded the cutter; and just as he was leaving the deck, I asked to be allowed to bear him company.

"Ay, ay," said he, "slip in; you may as well have a taste of it;" and in another minute I followed him into the boat. In another minute all three boats were silently but swiftly pulling away to the brig.

"I am sorry you are here, Mr. Franklin."

There was no need to look round to see who among the crowded boat's crew had recognised me; for I knew Adams's voice. I did turn my head, however, and found the speaker close behind me, armed, as all the rest of the men were, with cutlass and pistols.

"Why sorry, Adams?"

"You are young at such work, sir," replied the sailor; "for

you will find this a different sort of thing from boarding a peaceable English trading vessel."

"Your misfortune sticks in your throat still," said I; "I thought you had made up your mind to forget and forgive."

"Ay, ay, sir; what's the use of grumbling? But about this expedition; I reckon it won't be quite such a touch and go affair."

"You think the Frenchman will show fight, then?"

"Ay, sir, there is not much doubt about that; and some of these——"

"Silence, men!" growled our leader, sternly; and our conversation of necessity ceased.

Our men pulled with a will, and half an hour's rowing brought us within hailing distance of the brig; but no signs of life were visible on board, and her top-sails, which were set to catch the first puff of wind (which did not come), hung motionless against the masts.

The three boats were now in a line with the brig, pulling towards her stern—the cutter first, then the launch, then the jolly-boat close in the wake of the other two.

"A dozen more strokes, my men!" The words were scarcely out of Mr. Grey's mouth when from the brig a flash—a light puff of smoke; immediately following which, a rattling, hissing, whizzing overhead, accompanied by a cannon's roar, warned us that our enemies were active and alert, and that the conflict had begun.

"Canister!" said Mr. Grey, coolly; "pull away, lads."

Not a man in the cutter was hurt, for the destructive missiles passed over our heads (I could tell you of one who ducked to give them free passage); but we heard a crash behind us. The gun had been fatally aimed, and by that one discharge, as we afterwards found, the launch lost one third of her crew. There was no time for counting heads then, however, and no longer a





ADAMS SAVES YOUNG FRANKLIN'S LIFE.

motive for silence; and the moment after the discharge, a terrific shout—a wild tempest of yells, rather—from our boats, broke the silence of the night; and these were answered by cries of defiance from the brig.

Of everything that followed I have a very imperfect remembrance. I know there was a heavy fire of musketry, which knocked some of our men over; and then I felt myself grasped by the arm, and heard the friendly voice of Adams, hoarsely whispering me to keep close to him: "But keep under my lee as much as you can, my boy; and my life for yours, if it were ten times—ay, or a hundred."

How I got upon deck I cannot tell, for boarding-nettings had been triced up all round; and at all points the brig was prepared to resist the invaders. Pikes, cutlasses, muskets, pistols, gleamed in the air as our men swarmed up the sides; and it seemed to my inexperienced eye next to impossible that one of us could ever return to our ship alive. Yet, on the deck I was, and unhurt; and close to my side was the sailor Adams.

The deck now became the scene of a fearful struggle, and the boards beneath our feet were soon slippery with blood. Still I was uninjured; and, as it seemed to me, Adams, while performing deeds of valour, was watching over me with a determination to redeem his pledge at every risk. More than one blow which would have fallen upon me was warded off by his ready hand; and a pistol levelled at my head was dashed by him to the deck before it exploded.

As near as I can judge, the conflict lasted a quarter of an hour, and then it ceased, for the captain of the brig was killed, and the crew—or those who remained of them—surrendered. Then rose a shout of victory from our men, for the brig was ours.

## CHAPTER X.

## AFTER THE FIGHT.

I SHALL not soon forget the scene presented on the deck of the brig the next morning. The prisoners had been secured below, and some order had been restored ; but to see the wounded, and dying, and dead strewed around us was sickening. Several of our men were among the latter, and others were badly hurt. There were few, indeed, who were not more or less wounded. Strangely enough, I had escaped a scratch, and, more strangely still, so had Adams ; but Mr. Grey had come in for his share of the knocks, and was faint from loss of blood ; and poor Russell, who had come out in the launch, was lying dead, from a musket-shot through his head. Two others of our mess were injured, but not seriously. I shall not dwell upon this scene, however.

Fortunately, towards morning a slight wind blew up, which enabled the frigate to come up to us, and in a short time the deck was cleared ; the wounded men being conveyed to the cockpit of one ship, and our prize put under the temporary command of Mr. Raven, with the British flag flapping at her mast-head.

Presently, the brig's crew, or such as remained of them, were mustered on deck and examined. There was among these a tall, strong, shaggy, dark-browed man, who had been conspicuous in defence of the brig, and had been the last to surrender. It was he who had struck down our leader at the commencement of the struggle, and I recognised him in a moment (or thought I did) as the fellow who had nearly put an end to me with his pistol. Well, when this man was brought on deck, I saw that he hung behind the others ; I saw also that, on looking round furtively on his captors, his and Adams's eyes

met. It was only a momentary glance; but I was as sure as I could be that they knew each other, for a change, like that produced by sudden and painful surprise, passed over both their countenances. No one besides myself noticed this, however, and I took care not to seem to observe it. Unhappily for the prisoner, however, there was another of our men on whom a more marked effect was produced by his appearance. First, he stared with unbounded astonishment and incredulity; then his jaws expanded, and he scratched his head in a manner that would have been ludicrous if life and death had not hung upon the words he uttered as soon as he could collect his thoughts.

“Jem Green! Old messmate, I thought as how——”

I have a notion that the man would have forfeited all his expected prize-money to have recalled these unlucky words; but it was too late, though he did stop short in the middle of his sentence. The unhappy prisoner looked up, and directed his gaze to the spot whence the voice had proceeded, and his countenance turned cadaverously white. Then, seeing that all eyes were fixed upon him, he broke out with an oath—

“You might as well have let me have a squeak for my life;” and then, suddenly rushing to the gunwale, he would have thrown himself overboard, if he had not been prevented by half-a-dozen strong arms which pinned him to the deck.

The man is an Englishman, and a deserter, and you may guess what his fate will be. At present, however, he is confined in irons, under the charge of the master-at-arms, and will be tried by court-martial when we reach Gibraltar, which will now be in the course of a few hours, if the wind continues to hold on.

I may as well finish off about our prize. She is “The Alerte,” twelve guns, and short of hands, or we should not have captured



her so easily, if at all, with our three boats. She is now on the way to Plymouth, however, with her old crew, or such of them as survived, under hatches, and navigated by a complement of ours, under charge of a midshipman. So you see our mess is diminished in number—poor Russell killed, two others in hospital, and Vigors away in the brig.

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## CHAPTER XI.

EXPERIENCES OF A MIDSHIPMAN CONTINUED—GIBRALTAR—A  
COURT-MARTIAL—IS IT TO BE HANGING OR DROWNING?

A WEEK ago we came safely to anchor in the bay of Gibraltar, and here we are now waiting for further orders. I have not been on shore yet; but Mr. Grey promises that I shall have a run before we set sail again. By the way, Mr. Grey has recovered from his wounds received in boarding "The Alerte," which were not so serious as I fancied.

The bay is very beautiful and large. To me, after being so long, and for the first time, cruising about, with only the sea and the sky to be seen, it is refreshing to be near land again, although I have not set foot on it.

We are very lively too; for the bay is just now tolerably full of shipping. The admiral's ship is here, a magnificent first-rate, to which our frigate looks a mere pigmy. There are three other frigates also, and several gun-brigs, with a small fleet of merchantmen waiting for a convoy, to say nothing of several government sloops and cutters. I wish you were with me, Miles.

This for an introduction; now to carry on my story.

The day after we dropped anchor, and when certain com-

plimentary signals and other communications had passed, the captain's barge was manned, and he went off in state to the flag-ship, which lay half a mile nearer in shore. His crew were gaily dressed; and as I and another middy were ordered to accompany him, we rigged ourselves as well as we could at a short notice.

It was the first time I had been on board a ship of the line, and I was not prepared for the grand scale on which everything is set out; but I am not going to weary you with descriptions; so I shall pass on to say that Captain Maxwell was received with due honour, and that, while he was hob-a-nobbing with the admiral and principal officers, we youngsters were hospitably entertained in the midshipmen's cabin. It was late in the day when we returned; and it was plainly to be seen that the admiral's champagne had been potent with our too bibulous captain.

But business had been transacted as well, as was afterwards proved; for it was soon known that a time had been fixed for the court-martial to be held on the hapless deserter, Jem Green.

Accordingly, on the second day from that of the captain's visit, his barge was again manned, with a second boat to follow; and then the prisoner was brought on deck by the master-at-arms, and, after some little delay, was ordered into the boat, still under close guard; for the trial was to be held on board the admiral's ship. The sailor who had recognised the poor fellow, and was a principal witness against him, was placed in the bow of the barge.

I ought to explain that this sailor (Duckworth, by name), when serving on board a schooner, in the West Indies, some five years before, had this same Green as a messmate. Green was a drunken, turbulent man, and was often in trouble; at last, for some flagrant breach of discipline, and insolence to an officer, he was sentenced to be flogged. The sentence was

carried into effect, and the punishment was borne without flinching; but before his back had well healed he made his escape from the vessel, which was lying two or three miles off-shore. It was conjectured that the man had cast himself into the sea (he had often threatened to do so), and was drowned; or, more likely, had been caught up by sharks. No one imagined that he could possibly reach land; the surprise of Duckworth was extreme, therefore, when he saw his old mess-mate a prisoner, and in the character of a French sailor. This, however, is a digression, which would come in more properly by way of legal evidence, if I had had to describe the court-martial; but as I was not present, I shall omit the trial.

The poor wretch looked miserable enough when he came from below; and well he might, for he must have known that there was no chance of escape. And yet there was an air of dogged resolution about him, which revealed something of his character. I could not help pitying the fellow, Miles, though he had been nearly the death of me. But this was in fair fighting; only—what business had he to be fighting at all on the enemy's side?

Well, the man looked round while he was waiting orders to get into the boat; and again I saw—or fancied I saw—a look of intelligence pass between him and Adams, who was leaning over one of the guns; but in another moment the look was gone. I could easily account for it, without harbouring suspicion against Adams, however. In the roving life which, without entering into any particulars, he has led for many years past, there is nothing unlikely in supposing that the two men have previously met, and perhaps been companions. And I interpreted Green's look into—"Don't you turn king's evidence against me, Adams;" and the other's into—"Never fear; I'll keep my mouth shut, Green."

I am making a longish story of this ; and there is something more to come yet.

Along with our captain went Mr. Owen, our first lieutenant, and two midshipmen, besides his barge's crew, and the witnesses, one of whom, as I have said, was Duckworth ; another was Lieutenant Grey, and there were one or two seamen besides.

"What will they do with him, sir ?" I asked Mr. Raven, when the boat had put off, and we were leaning over the taffrail, watching the departure. I may as well tell you, Miles, if I have not mentioned it before, that Mr. Raven (the second lieutenant, you know) is generally disposed to be very condescendingly gracious to me, in consideration of the hospitality he received from the squire at Portsmouth.

Mr. Raven answered my question by a significant glance at the foreyard-arm.

"But he won't be executed here, will he, sir ?" I asked, with a shudder in my heart, I know.

"Of course ; you don't think they will hang the wretch on board the admiral's ship, do you ?" . . .

Hours passed away before the boat returned. At length, towards evening, we saw the barge putting off from the admiral's ship, and pulling steadily to our frigate. In a short time the captain stepped on board, and, for a wonder, was quite sober. It was not until he reached his ship that the other boat put off. You know, Miles, or, if you do not, I may tell you, that there is but a short twilight in these latitudes ; the minute the sun sinks below the horizon, it rapidly begins to grow dark, unless there be a moon to "give light by night." In more tropical latitudes the change is yet more sudden than it is here.

Well, the sun had just gone down when the boat put off from the admiral's ship, and, to have a clearer view, I mounted the rigging. The sky was clouded and the sea was troubled,

throwing up long ridges of white foam across the bay, and moaning, as if in unison with the sad and solemn business which had that afternoon been transacted, and in anticipation of the next day's tragic scene.

"We shall have a dirty night, sir," said an old sailor, from the cross-trees above my head.

"So it seems," said I, speaking carelessly; for I was watching the boat with fearful interest.

The twilight was deepening, the more quickly because of the cloudy atmosphere; but I could see the boat plainly enough to distinguish every man in it. In the stern-sheets, for instance, I could see the prisoner, seated between the master-at-arms on one side, and another sailor on the other. I could also make out the coxswain; and saw every oar as it dipped into the sea on either side of the boat, but only for a minute or two.

I have said that the bay was tolerably full of shipping; and between our frigate and the flag-ship were two or three merchant-men; and one of these was warping in nearer shore at that very time. It happened, therefore, that for two or three minutes, as the boat was threading between these vessels, I lost sight of her. Short as this time was, it made so much difference to the light that I could no longer clearly perceive the crew, though the boat was visible as she emerged from under the shadow of the moving merchant vessel; but the first glimpse I caught of her showed me that something was wrong. The next made it plain enough that the boat had capsized, and that the men were battling with the waves, or clinging to the boat's keel.

I was not the only spectator of this accident; for a hundred pair of eyes, besides my own, had been nervously looking out for the return of the condemned man; and in less time almost than it takes to tell, another boat was lowered from the frigate, and pulling out to the assistance of the struggling

sailors. I watched as long as the diminished twilight lasted, and then descended from my station aloft.

Half an hour passed away; and then the last boat returned, doubly laden, and towing the capsized one at its stern. All the men, with one exception, were saved; the missing man was—the prisoner.

\* \* \* \* \*

You may suppose that our captain was angry enough, and that the officer in charge of the boat got a regular wiggling. It must be said that he deserved it, too; and the men deserved punishment; for the truth is, their inconceivable awkwardness arose from their being half-drunk. They had been so jollily treated on board the admiral's ship, while the court-martial was going on below, that not one of them knew what he was about; and in returning, the boat had come in collision with the cable of the merchant-man while the warping was going on, and over it went. Fortunately, the ducking so far restored the men to their senses, as to enable them to make efforts for self-preservation; but they had too much to do in saving themselves to think of their prisoner, and what became of him was not known. It is conjectured, however, that he sank like a stone; for he has not been heard of since.

Captain Maxwell is a noble fellow, after all. He could not help making a fuss, for the look of the thing; but he has let the culprits off easily; and my opinion is, that he is not sorry at heart that his frigate has been spared the ignominy of having a poor wretch swinging at the yard-arm. There was a little breeze knocked up about it on board the admiral's ship, though; but as the prisoner had come to a violent and sudden end anyhow, the matter was suffered to drop.

## CHAPTER XII.

LIBERTY ON SHORE—A SOLITARY RAMBLE—A STARTLING  
RENCONTRE, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

NOW for another chapter in my experience, Miles; and that I am alive to write it down is owing to Adams, who certainly seems to be my good angel.

When I wrote last, I told you that Mr. Grey had promised me a run on shore. Well, about a week after that affair of the court-martial, three other middies and myself were permitted to take a boat and a boat's crew, and to do what we liked, provided we returned to the ship by sunset. At my suggestion, Adams was one of the crew; as, being a sober man, he might be useful in keeping the rest in something like fair order.

We were soon on shore; and, having secured our boat at the landing-place, we midshipmen very soon made for the town, leaving our men to take care of themselves, with orders to be in readiness for us in the evening.

I am not going to describe the queer old town and its queerer inhabitants, who seem to be drawn and congregated from all quarters of the globe; nor the Barbary apes which have colonized the rocks; nor the fortifications, which are strong enough to defy all the fleets of all the world. For all these matters you may consult your written authorities at home; and if you don't understand them, there would not be much hope of my making myself intelligible. Besides, I have something more important, as far as I am concerned, to tell you. It is enough to say that my companions and I amused ourselves for three or four hours in strolling over the said town and defences till we were both tired and hungry, and then found our way back to the place

where we had taken the precaution of ordering dinner to be ready for us at two o'clock.

A capital dinner we had too; for we were tolerably flush of the rhino, and we had not failed to remember this in giving our order. After dinner we took to wine and dessert.

You know, Miles, that I am not generally given to much wine, for which I have at times undergone some good-natured raillery from the squire, who more than once has predicted that I shall turn out a milksop. In this case my abstemiousness, he would perhaps say, led me into imminent peril.

After consuming about an hour at the dinner-table, and another half-hour over the bottle, I got tired of inaction, and proposed another ramble; but this was flatly rejected: so, finding I could make no impression on my messmates, I left them to their enjoyment, and started off alone. Leaving the town by the nearest route I could discover, I retraced my steps to the fortified heights, and, after passing numerous sentries at different points, found myself in a very secluded and romantic spot. How far I had strolled, and whither, I have at this present time very little clearer conception than you can have, Miles. I only know that when I looked at my watch, I found, to my surprise, that it was nearly five o'clock. This did not signify, however, as there were yet three hours good to sunset; and being uncommonly tired with the unaccustomed exercise, I sat down on a grassy mound. The scene was magnificent in the extreme. Far below me, on one hand, was the town I had forsaken, and beyond and around was the sea in all its beauty. At the distance above it where I had perched myself, the waves were diminished to almost indistinguishable ripples; and the noble vessels with which the bay was studded seemed dwindled into fishing-boats.

Close by me was the edge of the cliff. From the base, which



was buried in the sea, to the margin on which I was seated, the rock shot up almost perpendicularly, I know not how many hundreds of feet; so that when I cautiously looked over, it appeared as though a stone dropped from my hand would have fallen thence into the water. Intermediately, however, I knew there were immense caverns, hollowed out by nature, and opening in the face of the cliff, which were among the strongest defences of the place.

So much for description; now for action.

I was seated, as I tell you, on a little hillock, not a dozen yards from the edge of the rock, and was suffering my thoughts to wander far away, to Oakley, and "The Oaks," and the vicarage, and the woods. I was thinking, I remember, of that legendary story which Dick Border told me once, in his snarling manner, about Pikey's Swamp, and Hanging Wood, and my wretched father, whose insane and wild fury I trust and pray God in mercy forgave—I say, I was thinking of these things; and I am not sure that my eyes were not closed in a dreamy reverie, when the sound of footsteps startled me. I looked up; and—stare, Miles, if you will, for I promise you I did—who should I see before me but the deserter, erst the prisoner Jem Green, who was thought to be safely provided for at the bottom of the bay. Yes, there he was, *in propria personâ*, as large as life—in life itself—glaring down upon me, having turned an angle of the rock beyond, and pounced upon me unawares.

I am not over and above superstitious, I think; but I freely confess that this rencontre was more than my nerves could very well sustain. I was all the more thrown off my balance, too, by the cadaverous, sunken cheeks and starved looks of the wretched man, and his wild staring eyes, which seemed ready to start from their sockets, and his tangled, long, matted hair. It needed no great stretch of imagination to fancy that he had just



IT MUST EVIDENTLY BE A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.



risen from his watery grave to confront me with nameless terrors. But it was no spectral illusion; there he stood, glaring upon me, as much in the flesh as I myself was. I doubt, however, whether he was accountably rational. I don't think he was; I hope he was not.

I had not time to recover from the alarm into which I candidly acknowledge I was thrown, when, with a yell, which I almost fancy I can hear as I sit writing now, and a maniacal, "Ha! ha! so you think you have got me again, do you?" the miserable man sprang upon me, and grasped me by the collar.

Strange to say, at the first touch of his hand my terror took flight. I knew that, at any rate, I had only a mortal enemy to grapple with.

"Hands off, you scoundrel!" I said, calmly enough; and at the same time, by a sudden effort, I wrenched myself from his grasp.

But only for a moment. Before I had time to be on my guard I was in his hands again, more firmly pinned.

"No, no," he said; "you won't escape: don't think it."

"Do you mean to murder me?" I exclaimed.

"I'll tell you what I mean to do presently—hold still!" for I again struggled to get free. "Do you know who I am?" he demanded.

"Yes, I do;" and I added, with a degree of imprudence at which I am now amazed, "and you will live to swing yet; for water can't drown you, it seems."

The fellow laughed hideously. "You know me, do you? I guessed as much. And you don't think that I know you, I suppose? You don't know, do you, that I have been on the watch for you all day? that I saw your boat put off from your ship this morning; and that I have been hiding away to keep out of your sight? You don't know, do you, that I know

plainly enough what you are after? You young fool, what tempted you to come up after me here alone? Well, so much the better for me, and the worse for you."

I can write down what the madman said; for it is indelibly impressed on my memory; but I can give you but a faint idea of the way in which he said it. It was what may be supposed to be the manner of a mocking fiend. Don't imagine, however, that 'I stood quietly while he was thus addressing me. I struggled, though vainly, to wriggle out of his hands, and, failing in this, I grappled with him; and, thus locked together, we stood face to face. But the odds were altogether against me if it should come to a tussle, I knew. The fellow was half a head taller than me; and though he was emaciated and weakened by what he had undergone since his escape, I took sufficiently correct measure of his strength to know that I was in his power. I thought it advisable to temporise, therefore.

"If you think that I was sent on shore to capture you, you are mistaken," I said. "If I had been, I should not be here alone and unarmed."

This line of argument seemed to produce a momentary effect on the fellow, but he did not loosen his hold.

"There's no one on board 'The Glorious,' nor in the fleet either, who does not suppose you were drowned," said I.

"Will you swear that?"

"I would swear that to the best of my knowledge it is so, if it were necessary to swear at all," I replied.

"You'll have to swear something else before I let you go—if I do make up my mind to let you go," he said, grimly. "Down on your knees now, and swear"—he bent me down by main force as he said this—"swear that you'll never split upon having seen me alive, if I let you go."

"I will not swear," I said.

"Then——" and the wretch uttered a fearful oath, "you may take your last look of the sky; for you will never see it again."

He was dragging me to the edge of the cliff. I shouted loud: I struggled hard.

"Ah! call away," he said, mockingly: "you will call loud and long enough before you will be heard here."

"You don't mean to harm me?" I said, or rather gasped, as we both paused for breath.

"Will you swear?"

"No."

"Then in two minutes you will be at the bottom of the cliff."

The man said this, and by his eye I could see that he meant it too, and that there was nothing left for me but to part with life as dearly as possible.

You may say, "Why did you not swear not to betray the poor fellow?" Positively, Miles, I cannot tell. I have asked myself the same question again and again, and have found no rational answer. I had never thought of betraying him. If we had parted the moment after we met, I would have guarded his secret as carefully as though my own life, not his, had depended on its being kept. I had no malice against him, and had rejoiced at his escape. But I have a spice of obstinacy in my disposition, I believe; and I was not going to be compelled to obey in that fashion.

We struggled again; and I knew now that it was for dear life. I have said that there was not above twelve yards' space from the spot on which I had seated myself and the edge of the cliff; and we were now halfway between. Miles, it makes me sick and dizzy when I now think of it.

There was not another word spoken by either of us. Breath, with me, was too precious for this, even had my intended

murderer given me the chance of speaking, which he did not. His hand was at my throat, and mine at his. Fortunately for me, the fellow had a handkerchief round his neck, tied in a fast knot; and I obtained such a hold of this as enabled me to press my knuckles desperately against his windpipe, so that he could scarcely breathe, and became almost black in the face. In spite of this advantage, however, and in spite of the desperate strength I put forth, I felt myself going—going. The six yards between me and destruction were diminished to three; and, inch by inch, I was still yielding ground. The only thought I had at that terrible moment was, that when I went over my murderer would go with me; and that in a few minutes we should both of us be in eternity.

Then we fell, and rolled over and over, still holding on to each other like savage beasts; then the wretch was uppermost, and I felt my strength departing and my grasp relaxing.

I stretched out my disengaged arm to put all my remaining power into a last desperate blow; and I was conscious of being near the edge of the cliff.

At this instant a horrible yell rang in my ears—a yell of triumph—and I felt that the man was making an effort to disengage himself from my grasp. I shut my eyes instinctively and breathed a prayer. . . .

Miles, I felt myself sinking, sinking. My senses were gone. . . .

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## CHAPTER XIII.

## RESTORED TO LIFE—EXPLANATIONS.

“**W**HAT cheer, then? What cheer? My poor boy! There! that’s brave, Mr. Franklin. Now your colour is coming back; and you are safe, sir—safe.”

Words to this import, and many more of them, seemed to call me back to life, or rather, to rouse me from a dreamy vision of green fields, murmuring streams, and a calm bright sky. I opened my eyes, and found myself with my head reclining on the strong arm of Richard Adams, whose countenance, as he bent over me, was softened into feminine tenderness, while tears were unconsciously and freely trickling down his weather-beaten cheeks. My bosom was bared, and the cool breeze of approaching evening was gratefully fanning my fevered frame.

I was too confused and faint at first to speak or to move; but full consciousness soon returned, and brought with it the vivid recollection of my recent death-struggle. A burst of hysterical tears and sobs relieved me.

“That’s well, Mr. Franklin: don’t be ashamed to cry, sir; it will do you good, you know,” said Adams, in gentle, loving tones, while he raised me a little from my recumbent posture, but without removing his arm from under me. So, as I sat by his side, my head still rested against his shoulder.

“Where am I?” I asked faintly, as soon as I could articulate. My voice sounded very strange to me. And in asking this question I looked up and around; for my full impression was that I had fallen precipitately down from the cliff, and had by some miraculous means escaped from death.



"Look about you, Mr. Franklin; can't you remember the place?" said Adams, anxiously, I thought.

I did look around; and then I knew that I was seated on the same bank from which I had been roused by the approach of the man Green. The edge of the cliff was just beyond, with the blue sea stretching out in the distance: and between ourselves and the cliff the ground was trampled and the short turf torn up. I shuddered as I saw it.

"The prisoner—where is he?" I asked, fearfully.

"Ah, I see, sir, you are come to now."

"Is he gone?"

"Ay, ay, sir; don't be alarmed about the man, Mr. Franklin; he is gone; he won't trouble you again. But how was it?" he demanded. "Can you bear to talk about it, and tell me how it happened that you two were grappling together in that mad way?"

I told him, as I have already told you, Miles, all that I remembered of what had previously happened.

"Ay," said Adams, coolly: "I thought that must have been it; but I did not know that you might not have tried to capture the man single-handed. But he was afraid of you, you see; and 'tis fear that makes some savage creatures dangerous. He thought you would be hunting after him; and he has no fancy for the yard-arm. It was all a mistake, altogether, Mr. Franklin."

"It was a mistake that would have cost me my life but for your help, Adams," I said.

"Well," he replied, "I cannot deny that another half, or quarter of a minute, would have been too late. You were all but over the cliff, Mr. Franklin, when I caught the fellow by the scruff of the neck and sent him to the right-about. But never mind about that now. 'A miss is as good as a mile,'

they say. You were as near death on board 'The Alerte,' sir; and yet you escaped."

"Yes," said I; "and you saved me then, as you have saved me now, and from the same man too. I shall not forget that I twice owe my life to you."

The man laughed; and I should have thought the laugh a strange mocking one, if I had not witnessed the strong emotions Adams had betrayed just before—emotions which contradicted the suspicion that he thought little of the peril from which he had rescued me. It seemed to me then, and I fancy now, that he was half ashamed of the interest he had shown in me, and therefore assumed an indifference he did not feel. It may\* be flattering to myself to think this, but I cannot avoid the conclusion.

Instead of answering me, having laughed his laugh, he said, touching his hat, "If you feel strong enough to walk, sir, maybe we had better be moving downwards. There's a longish stretch between here and the harbour."

I looked at my watch, and saw that it was six o'clock. Then I started to my feet, and for the first time felt how sore and stiff and strained I felt with my wrestling. After a little while, however, this wore off, and I strode on, followed by Adams.

We went on for some time in silence: then I said—

"You have not explained, Adams, how you came to be near just at the nick of time to save my life."

"If I were on equal terms with you, sir——" he began.

"Don't be a fool, Adams; you are on equal terms, or rather, on more than equal terms with me. Where should I now be, but for you?"

"Well, then, Mr. Franklin, being on equal terms with you—for the time only—might I ask how *you* came to be up yonder?"

He pointed backward with his thumb to the point whence we had descended.

"That's easily explained," said I. "I got tired of sitting over the wine, and as I could not move my friends away from the table, I left them and climbed up there to breathe freer."

"Just so, sir; I got tired of my friends too," said he, "and wanted more air to breathe."

"But it strikes me," I continued, pertinaciously, "that you had some knowledge of my being on before, else why ——?"

"It would be easy for me," interposed Adams, "to deny this; but there is no harm in my saying that one of the sentries below told me that a reefer had passed him. And, to tell you the truth, I suspected it was you, Mr. Franklin; for there is not another midshipman of your mess so likely to have run away from the wine as you, sir."

This was the truth, no doubt; but I question whether it was all the truth. I suspect, Miles, that the good fellow, who has, as I have told you before, chosen to take me under his special protection (out of gratitude for the slight service I once rendered him), had watched and followed me. Well for me that he had.

I said that I had reason to be thankful that he was of the same mind with myself; and added, "I should like to ask you another question, Adams."

"Still on equal terms, sir?"

"Of course. Answer it or not as you like. The question is, Were you aware, or did you suspect, that Jem Green the deserter had escaped and was at large?"

"I can easily answer *that*, Mr. Franklin. Before I saw him just now, with your life in his hands, I had no more doubt than you had of the fellow having been drowned; but it is plain that he has as many lives as a cat." The man said this so promptly

and above-board, that I was convinced of his truthfulness; at the same time he spoke as though he were tired of the subject. I did not drop it, however; for a horrible suspicion had crossed my mind.

"Is the man living now, do you suppose?" I asked.

"You mean to say, did I pitch him over the cliff, as he deserved? No, sir; I didn't pitch him over the cliff, though I had a good mind to it. I let him go, Mr. Franklin — we are still on equal terms, sir."

"Don't doubt it; and ever shall be. I am glad you let the fellow go."

By this time we had made a considerable descent towards the town, and we walked on in silence for several minutes, which was at last broken by Adams.

"I have a favour to ask of you, Mr. Franklin."

"Granted before it is asked," I said.

"I think you are not revengeful and bloodthirsty, sir."

"I hope not," said I.

"And that it wouldn't be any real pleasure to you to see any poor fellow swinging at the yard-arm, or anywhere else?"

"You are right."

"You would rather give him a chance of his life, I take it, sir."

"There is no doubt of it," I said.

"Even though he had gone against the law, sir."

"Let the law take care of itself," I rejoined; "I seek no revenge."

"And even if the poor wretch had made an attempt on your own life?" he added.

"I'll forgive him, if I am secure from him in future."

"That's noble, sir. Well, Mr. Franklin, I'll be bondsman for Jem Green in future: and what I want to ask of you is, to be mum about this afternoon's work."

"I promise I will," said I.

"You see," continued Adams, "if you should split upon having seen the man, every hole and corner in Gibraltar would have to be searched till——"

"Be satisfied," I said; "the fellow shall be safe, as far as I am concerned."

"Thank you, sir." And then we walked on silently again. This time I spoke first.

"Adams, do you mind telling——"

"The truth, sir?"

"Yes, the truth."

"When it isn't uncommonly inconvenient, sir, or more than ordinarily dangerous, I can generally manage it," said he, laughing.

"Well, will it be inconvenient or dangerous to say that you and that deserter are old acquaintances?"

"What should make you think such a thing, sir?" asked Adams, rather startled, I thought.

I told him of having detected looks of intelligence passing between them.

"My looks tell tales, it seems then, Mr. Franklin. Well, sir, being still on equal terms ——?"

"Yes, on equal terms."

"I don't mind saying to you, Mr. Franklin, that I and Green knew one another very well, some years ago; but we have not met since then. And more than that, I never wanted to meet him again, and don't want now."

"I can understand that," I said.

"It is not a story for to-day, sir," continued Adams; "but some day I may ask you to hear all about it."

"I shall be pleased——" I began to say; but he stopped me.

"No; it won't be a pleasant story, as you will feel when the

time comes—if it should come—for you to hear it. But now, sir”—and the man touching his hat, fell farther back, and dropped entirely the freedom of his tone and manner—“equal terms being over, I had better go and look up the boat’s crew, if you will give me orders.”

We had reached the town; and though it wanted an hour to sunset, I expected that the time would be short enough for collecting stragglers. I gave Adams the order, therefore, and parting with him then, to meet at the landing-place presently, I went in search of my messmates, whom I found where I had left them two or three hours before. How I managed to get them into the boat, and how (thanks to Adams, principally) we all managed to reach the frigate without any serious accident, isn’t worth telling.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

UP THE MEDITERRANEAN—MALTA—A RUN ON SHORE—SAILORS  
ON HORSEBACK—A SHIP ON FIRE.

AFTER a month in harbour, during which time we were pretty busy, refitting and shipping fresh stores, we received orders to proceed up the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, the fleet of merchantmen which had made the bay lively sailed under convoy to England. This was a disappointment to some of us on board “The Glorious,” as we had hoped to get a look at home; but there is no use in grumbling.

A run of six days, aided by a favourable wind, brought us to Sicily, where we were joined by two other frigates, in whose company we set sail at once to Malta. It now leaked out that our small squadron was under orders to join another portion of the fleet at Constantinople. Here we now are; and after a good

long silence (for which, perhaps, you may thank me in your heart, Miles), I shall give you some account of how the time has passed since I last wrote to you.

I must tell you, first, that while we were anchored at Malta, some half-dozen of us reefers had another run on shore; and we managed to make an active day of it, if not a profitable one.

Fancy, Miles, what delight it is to a set of boys—for we are positively little better or wiser than boys, though we have down on our chins, and bristles, too, some of us; but fancy, I say, the delight, after being cooped up for weeks and months, of being emancipated, even for a few short hours, and casting cares and grievances to the winds—of being allowed to revel in nature, and freedom from constraint. Excepting my day at Gibraltar, which was near bringing me to such a tragic end, I had not trodden *terra firma* since leaving England; and all my fellow reefers were in like case.

It was a splendid day; the sun shone out upon us to gladden our hearts; and with hats waving and throats vocal, we tumbled into our boat and pulled to shore.

Having landed at the Nix Mangiare stairs, we strolled into Valetta; peeped into and admired the grandeur and magnificence of St. John's, and other of the most celebrated churches; ordered a dinner to be ready for us by six o'clock at the "Croce di Malta;" and then mounted such cavalry as we could procure, intending to have a gallop right across the island.

Did you ever see a sailor on horseback, Miles? I suppose not, though; for your acquaintance does not run among such amphibious animals. Well, the pleasure is to come, and I won't take off the gist of your enjoyment by attempting to describe what is indescribable. As for myself, you know I was a tolerably respectable horseman at Oakley, and I have not yet

forgotten my *tours de manège* ; but as to the rest of us, I don't believe that one of them had ever crossed a horse's back before this time ; so much the better fun ; for whatever else they are incapable of doing, sailors stick tight enough when once mounted.

Well, off we started, some of us, for want of nobler barbs, on mules, one or two on "Jerusalem ponies ;" for my own part, I got a decent hack, whose worst fault was a disposition to run away from the society into which it was thus thrown. I did not wonder at this, and rather applauded the animal for its pride of birth and station.

A ride of about two hours took us to Citta Vecchia, and, after freshening, we proceeded to the famous catacombs, the chief objects of our excursion. They are situated near the village, and excavated in the rock of which the whole island is composed. There was not so much to be seen, after all. The only relics of mortality I observed in these "low-browed caverns of the dead" were five men, dressed in the habiliments of Capuchin friars, and placed upright in one of the numerous niches. Their hands and faces were shrunk and withered to the appearance of dust-coloured parchment, and their glassy eyes stood open with vacant, unmeaning stare.

At six o'clock we returned to Valetta, where we dined according to order, and then returned on board without further adventure. When I remind you that this was several weeks ago, and that I have not since that day once trodden mother earth, you will forgive my referring to the expedition.

And now I have a more serious matter to describe.

Two or three weeks ago, we were anchored off Tenedos, with our squadron augmented to some half-dozen frigates and two or three smaller craft. I had just turned in, one night, when an alarm of fire roused me from my first sweet nap, and caused me,



with all the officers and crew who were not there already, to tumble up on deck. In the first confusion it was believed that our own ship was on fire; but fortunately (for us) this was a mistake.

On first reaching the deck, I stumbled against Adams, and asked him what the matter was.

He pointed to the starboard, and said, "'The Ajax.'" This was the name of one of the frigates we had recently joined, and which was anchored at two or three cables' length from us.

There was no need to say more. Volumes of dense smoke, illumined by occasional flashes of lurid flame, were bursting from her stern-ports, and drifting away to leeward in clouds which blackened the moon-lit sky, and cast dark shadows upon the sea.

It was soon seen that the fire was making fearful progress, the flames issuing in a continuous stream from the after-part of the ship, and ascending towards the poop. The night signal had been made for assistance upon the first alarm, and every exertion was used to get our boats in readiness to take off the crew, while at the same time it was necessary to increase the distance of our frigate from the doomed ship.

I had never, till that night, seen the full value of discipline on board ship. In the first moment of alarm, and when half of our men had been roused from their hammocks, there was a great degree of confusion; but no sooner had the drum beat to quarters than the confusion ceased, every man took his proper station, and the orders, which were uttered in rapid succession, were as rapidly obeyed. It was this admirable instinct of instant obedience which enabled us effectually to aid our consort.

The first thing our captain did was to order the cable to be cut and to stand out to sea at a safe distance from the

burning ship; and then the boats were lowered, ready for prompt service, their crews gliding down the frigate's side, and taking their several positions in silence.

By this time we could see that the other ships of the squadron had also taken the alarm; and in a few minutes, comparatively, the sea was studded with boats, gathering round and hastening to the scene of conflagration.

Not being in either of the boats, and having, at that time, no duty on board to perform, except that of conveying orders from the quarter-deck to different parts of the frigate, I had leisure enough to watch with fearful interest the progress of destruction; for, from the manner in which the fire was gaining head, it was now evident that the safety of the crew must depend upon the exertions and assistance of the boats of the squadron. The flames had already burst through the stern, wrapping the whole of the after part of the ship in fire; owing, however, to the direction of the wind, and also, no doubt, to the great and untiring efforts of the stout-hearted crew to subdue them, their progress forward was not rapid. Still, they advanced, and before midnight presented one of the most terribly sublime pictures I ever beheld.

The wind had now sunk almost to a calm, and the dense black smoke hung like a pall around the devoted ship, while the fire that glowed and raged within showed every spar, shroud and rope as distinctly painted as if traced by an artist's pencil. Heated by the intensity of the fire, the guns were discharged, one by one, knelling the death of the noble ship, like minute guns at the funeral of a deceased officer. Fiercer and fiercer glowed and hissed the resistless element; higher and higher mounted the flames; soon the tough, strong cordage felt their withering touch, dissolving like flax before the breath of the destroyer. No longer sustained aloft, the yards canted on end,

and then sank into the yawning fiery gulf, which seemed to roar and hunger for their reception. The lofty masts, which stood proudly erect to the last, nor yielded till the relentless fire had pierced their inmost core, at length fell prone into the sea. After their fall the hull long remained unmoved; nor did it drift until two o'clock in the morning, when the light wind having veered a little more to the eastward, it was slowly borne towards the Island of Tenedos, where it struck; and at five o'clock a partial explosion of the magazine shattered to pieces what the fire had not consumed.

Previous to this, our boats had returned, having saved a good many of the crew; and on the following day it was ascertained that the captain and half the officers and crew were saved; all the rest had miserably perished.

It is probable that many more would have been rescued had the same intrepidity, coolness, and attention to orders been observed by the whole of the crew, after all hope of saving the ship was abandoned, which marked their conduct up to that time. It appears, however, that when this hope was lost, discipline also disappeared; and the men who had bravely exerted themselves in attempting to subdue the flames, losing all self-command, and even the instinct of self-preservation, madly rushed to their own destruction, precipitating themselves into the sea by dozens and scores, and sinking before the boats could reach them. Others, breaking open the spirit stores, drank to intoxication, in spite of all efforts on the part of the officers to prevent it, and were consequently incapable of exertion on their own behalf. But it is not fair to blame these men too severely; for who shall dare say that he will preserve his self-possession and keep all his faculties clear and undisturbed at a moment when, no longer cheered by hope or sustained by excitement, a miserable death from fire or flood stares him in the face?

Nothing, I was assured, could exceed the fortitude, coolness, and exertions of the captain of "The Ajax" on this night of trial. All his orders were given with a distinctness, judgment, and absence of hesitation that inspired the crew with confidence, while his voice, conduct, and demeanour excited them to still renewed exertions, while exertions were not hopeless, and before unreasoning panic had arisen. As long as the most remote chance of saving the ship remained, it is right to say these exertions were not relaxed. Inch by inch and foot by foot the captain retreated before his victorious enemy, until driven to the fore-castle, where, with a few officers and men, he strove to shelter himself. At length, driven to the spritsail-yard, which the fire had not yet reached, and seeing that every soul had now left the ship, he finally plunged into the sea, where he struggled for a considerable time until picked up by a boat.

Let me say a word or two in praise of our men. This is the more due to them, as I remember I gave them rather a black character in my early correspondence. They behaved wonderfully well all through this affair; there was not one of them who could be engaged in saving the hapless crew, who did not behave like a hero, and so as to earn the well-deserved approbation and thanks of our captain. My favourite sailor, Adams, especially conducted himself with astonishing gallantry, I am told, and risked his life again and again, in saving the lives of others. That poor fellow is a mystery to me, Miles, which I cannot fathom. I am sure he is a man of superior education, and his morals are unimpeachable. At the same time, there are many indications, trifling in themselves, which plainly evince, to a practised eye, that he was not originally a sailor. Mr. Grey has tried once or twice (so he tells me) to "draw him out;" but the man is obstinately reserved, and will throw no light upon his past history. After all, I dare say

there is no particular mystery in it. The probability is, that the unfortunate man has been frowned upon by what, I remember, he once called his "fate," and, having sunk from some higher station in life, naturally shrinks from making known what would only expose him to fresh mortification. Enough of this, however.

I find that I have described the catastrophe which befell "The Ajax" at greater length than I intended, and shall only add that the burial of the dead (that is, of as many of those who perished as could be collected) was very solemn. But sailors have not much leisure for mourning over departed friends; and I am afraid that the consciousness of constant personal peril has rather a hardening effect on the mind. At any rate, the scene was soon obliterated from most of our minds, when, three or four days afterwards, we weighed anchor and steered for the Dardanelles.

How long we shall remain on this station, or what work is cut out for us here, I cannot say. Probably, when I next find time to write, it will be from another part of the world.

Before I seal up this despatch, Miles, I must remind you that "as cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." There is no certainty about the receipt of letters on board ship, of course; but, put into the right channel, they are pretty sure to arrive at last; and you need not fear that the news will be too old to be welcome. You have been to Oakley once and again, no doubt, since I left. Tell me all about it, Miles—not forgetting the vicarage.\*

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\* The author of "The Franklins" is indebted to an interesting work ("Reminiscences of a Naval Officer—Captain A. Crawford") for many particulars in the above chapter; especially the description of the burning of "The Ajax," of which he has freely availed himself.

## CHAPTER XV.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL CHASE—AN ESCAPED PRISONER—AN  
EXPEDITION PLANNED.

**N**o such thing, Miles; I was not killed; so don't believe the "Gazette."

True, I was wounded, and, in the hurry of sending off despatches, was reported as dead; but this only proves that despatches, like bulletins, can sometimes lie.

I was very near falling into the hands of the enemy, too; and if it had not been for a faithful fellow who carried me half a mile or more on his back, amidst showers of musket-balls, I should be now, probably, kicking my heels in a French or Spanish prison, instead of sitting up comfortably in my berth, released from duty, and picking up strength as fast as I can. As I have nothing else to do, I shall give you some of the particulars of the action in which I was laid low, and saw many a poor fellow laid still lower.

My last to you was written months ago, when we were lying off Constantinople; but the squadron did not do much there. Somehow or other, I suspect, the object of our visit was defeated, though our chiefs don't choose to say so. At all events, we returned as we went, and, getting back into the Mediterranean, the squadron dispersed, according to orders; and it fell to the lot of "The Glorious" and another or two, to cruise about, standing off and on the coast, and watching our opportunity of engaging any enemy who might show himself—ourselves having friendly ports to retire to in case of need.

By the way, this cruising about, without any specified and definite object, is tedious work enough, especially when it is continued, without any incident to break its monotony, for

weeks and months. To be sure, the Mediterranean is a fine sea for variety; and so we had storms and gales and hurricanes, in turn with sunshine and calm, to keep us active. But, after all, it is pitiful work to be watching perpetually for an enemy who won't show himself, or, worse and more pitiful still, picking up and crowing over such small craft as can offer no defence against all one's bullying.

At last, however, we had a chance of warmer work.

We had been several days at Mahon, where the flag-ship was stationed. Our pretext for going into port was that we were running short of water and fresh provisions; but you will readily believe that our captain was not reluctant to step on shore, nor the officers either; so we were longer than perhaps we need have been in shipping our stores. The work was finished at last, however, and, weighing anchor, we returned to our former station; but our trip had temporarily separated us from our two consorts.

One afternoon, about three o'clock, the man at the mast-head shouted out that he saw a sail on the weather-bow; and then, in quick succession, he reported another and another. In less than a minute the captain himself was in the rigging, and Mr. Owen with him, glasses in hand. Presently they came down, rubbing their hands like schoolboys when some fun is in the wind; and, by the orders that were instantly given, we knew that it was to be a chase.

The weather was hazy; but we were not long making out that the distant sails were a little fleet of merchant vessels under convoy; and, from the quarter where they first made their appearance, as well as from other tokens, we knew that they must belong to the enemy—at present, that is to say; for we had a strong longing to make them ours. It afterwards proved that this small fleet was bound to Barcelona, pretty well

freighted with goods, and had determined, on the strength of their convoy, either to evade our ships or to set them at defiance.

It was plain, nevertheless, that they had no intention of coming in contact with us if they could help it; for our pursuit had no sooner commenced than they crowded all sail, and, gathering round their guardian ships, made off with what speed they were able.

Night came on, dark and foggy, and the fugitive vessels were soon hidden from our sight. The wind increased, however, and we all felt pretty sure that our anticipated prey could not easily escape us. At any rate, there was good hope of a brush with the enemy.

You may be sure, therefore, that when morning came all eyes were eagerly trying to make out the enemy; and you may judge of our disappointment when, instead of clearing away, as we had hoped, the fog rapidly increased, so that it was impossible to see a cable's-length a-head. There was nothing for us, therefore, but to feel our way cautiously through it, and to follow the track which we were pretty sure the fleet must take.

About noon the fog slowly rose; and again you may judge of our mortification when we found that not a sail was in sight. By what means they had all escaped it was impossible to tell. But escaped they had, for that time at least; and as a ship at sea leaves no trail behind it, we could only guess that they had taken advantage of the fog, and, fear lending wings to their flight, had outstripped us in the chase. Orders were given, therefore, to continue in our course, and a sharp look-out to be kept from the mast-head.

Towards evening two sails were successively reported in sight. These proved to be our consorts, by whom we were joined on



the following morning ; but no more, for that time, was seen of the vessels of which we were in search.

Three days afterwards, as we were cruising about, just within sight of land, a fishing-boat was observed to put off from shore, and stand boldly out about midway between, when the fishermen shortened sail and began to cast their nets. This proceeding attracted very little notice. We do not war with fishermen ; and unless they choose to thrust themselves in our way, we leave them to follow their calling in peace and quiet. So we went on our way lazily, and, the wind presently dropping, we furled sails and laid-to.

The fishing-boat was still in sight, and we could observe the men taking in their nets. Apparently they had been unsuccessful ; for, instead of returning to shore, they took to their oars and followed the course of the ships, keeping, however, at a safe distance from us, but otherwise paying no regard to our presence : and once more they cast their nets. They were thus employed when night fell.

Near midnight, the watch on deck were surprised by seeing a light dancing on the waves, and apparently approaching the ship, on the larboard side ; then they heard the faint dip of oars ; and the next moment a shout came across the water—" Ship a-hoy !"

" Boat a-hoy !" shouted the officer who had charge of the watch ; accompanying his hail with, " Stand off, or——"

There was no occasion to give words to the warning, for the sound of the oars had already ceased ; and after a few more words had passed, the boat was permitted to pull to larboard, and a rope having been thrown over, a single individual climbed up upon deck ; and then the boat swiftly pulled away.

The whole history of this is, that the man was an Englishman, who had escaped from a Spanish prison, and had been hiding in

the fisherman's cottage for some days. He had the means, it seems, of satisfying the fisherman for his hospitality, and had further induced the man to put him on board our frigate. All this was simple enough; and we could now understand the manœuvres of the fishing-boat. But there was something else to follow.

During the time he was hiding, this escaped prisoner had learned from his host that the little fleet of merchant vessels, with their armed convoys, which we had so unaccountably lost, had put into the port of X——, where they were at that time snugly and safely sheltered by a formidable mole, protected by a strong battery; the town being garrisoned by a detachment of French troops. This news spread like wildfire on the following morning; and our men were grinning with vexation at finding that we had actually sailed through the fleet on the night of the pursuit, while the enemy, favoured by the fog, had shortened sail, and then doubled and made for the nearest place of refuge.

But this feeling of vexation was turned into exultation, when, later in the day, it was whispered from the quarter-deck to the fore-castle, and in every berth, that the captains and lieutenants having had a council of war, had determined on a cutting-out expedition, and that the boats of the squadron were to be combined in the attempt to obtain possession of the prizes.

Accordingly we changed our course, and, taking advantage of a favourable breeze, the three frigates were opposite X——, about five miles out at sea, on the afternoon of the following day.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

A CUTTING-OUT EXPEDITION, WITH A MORAL, SHOWING THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO GO OUT FOR WOOL AND COME HOME SHORN.

THE night was about as dark as a wolf's mouth (if you happen to know how dark that is, Miles), when the boats' crews were piped on deck and ordered to prepare for service. They were already prepared for this, however; and after a mustering of all hands on quarter-deck, the boats were manned and pushed off.

It was a formidable affair; most of the boats of the three frigates were employed in the service, and more than three hundred seamen were drafted into them, and over two hundred marines; the whole force being under the command of the captain of "The Silenus," one of our consorts. The plan agreed upon was to land a sufficient force to surprise and occupy the town; then a detachment of the boats was to pull at once to the mole, spike the guns, and blow up the magazine. These enterprises being successful—of which we did not permit ourselves to doubt—the vessels and their convoys would be at our mercy; for if they were to remain in the harbour they would be easily captured, and if they should attempt to escape to sea, they would run into the very teeth of our frigates. In order that friend might be distinguished from foe, each of our men, both blue-jackets and marines, had a strip of white canvas fastened round the left arm. We reckoned, however, on so easy and unresisted a surprise, that the precaution was thought almost needless.

Well, it was about eleven o'clock when we pushed off, and a small glimmer of starlight, which just then broke from behind

the heavy clouds, enabled us dimly to discern our flotilla of boats, and to prevent their running foul of each other. Sound there was none, for all the oars were muffled, and the strictest silence was enjoined in every boat. At the head of the mole was a small lighthouse, which served admirably for a guide-star, and towards which we steered. I should tell you that I had been ordered into one of our boats, which was in charge of the first lieutenant, Mr. Owen. I looked around, as the darkness gradually cleared away, to see if Adams was among the crew ; but I could not distinguish him.

It was a stiff pull for our men ; but they went at it with a will, and presently we got a little more light on the subject, for the clouds cleared away, and the stars shone out upon us. I could not help thinking, Miles, that it was sad work after all to be engaged in ; and I wondered what difference, in God's sight, there might be between us and any other marauders. But a reefer has no business to think (I am told), but only to obey orders ; and so, as I could not keep my mind quiet, I turned my thoughts to Oakley, and began to wonder what had happened there while I had been away. I had not done thinking of this when—bang, bang—and a cannon-ball or two came whizzing over our heads, and plunged into the water a quarter of a mile in our wake.

Quietly as we had carried out our enterprise, it was plain that we were discovered ; and the firing of the cannon from the battery was a pretty significant token that we were not to have everything our own way.

We were now about half-a-mile from the beach ; and there being no longer any motive for silence, our men gave voice in a tremendous cheer, which must have been heard far beyond the town itself ; at the same time, we could hear the drums of the garrison beating to arms, and saw lights glancing about from

one point to another, proving that our enemies were on the alert, and preparing to receive us.

Once more the battery opened fire ; and this time with more fatal effect. A fearful crash behind us told that one of our boats was *hors-de-combat*, and the next instant, the waves were covered with broken planks and oars, and struggling men. These last were soon taken up ; and in a few minutes the foremost of the boats touched the beach, and the men sprang on shore, amidst a volley of musketry poured in upon them by a company of soldiers, who, at the first alarm, had hastily collected and marched to the beach. But they were too few to offer serious resistance to our landing ; and after the first discharge of their fire-arms, which did little execution, they hastily retreated towards the town, leaving us free to disembark at our leisure, the boats being by this time partially sheltered from the guns on the battery.

Of the further proceedings of that night, on the large scale, I can only tell you at second-hand ; but I may as well give you this borrowed account before I turn to the short history of my own particular adventures.

After the soldiers had retreated, and our men had landed, the detachment intended to take possession of the town rushed forward under the command of Captain Lawes, of "The Silenus," driving the Frenchmen before them ; while the other half, under the orders of Lieutenant Owen, pushed for the mole, and after a short, desperate conflict, took possession of the battery, the guns of which they proceeded to spike.

Their next proceeding was to board the convoy ships, in which they succeeded, though not without considerable loss ; and having taken possession of them, they made preparations for taking them and the merchant vessels out of harbour on the following morning.

So far all went well enough ; but things were very different with the detachment which had taken possession of the town. Possession they did indeed take, and drove the soldiers through its streets to the country on the opposite side. But my own adventures come in here.

I had joined this detachment, then, with a party of our sailors under my command, as I had been ordered, and was pressing on with the rest, when a word or two uttered at my elbow caused me to turn round.

"Is that you, Adams?" It was almost too dark to distinguish features ; but I knew the voice.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"You were not in our boat?"

"No, Mr. Franklin: I was in the boat that got smashed ; but I was picked up, you see."

"Was anybody hurt?"

"Yes, sir: Mr. Treherne will never whistle again." Mr. Treherne was our boatswain.

"Was he struck, then?"

"Struck and drowned both. I saw him go down like a shot after the boat capsized."

"How is it you are here, Adams, if you were in Mr. Treherne's crew?" I asked presently. "His party was drafted to the mole, I thought."

"Yes, sir: but not fancying that work, you see, Mr. Franklin——"

"Not fancying it?"

"Well, to tell the truth, sir, I am not over and above partial to putting myself into unnecessary danger," said the man, coolly.

"Tell that to the marines," I said, laughing.

"You don't believe me, then, Mr. Franklin?"

"I do not believe you are the one to shirk duty because danger may be in the road," said I.

"I am obliged to you for your good opinion, Mr. Franklin," said he. "Well, sir, put it another way, and say, that there are more hard knocks to be got in this direction than the other; and that I am ambitious for more than a full share of them. Will that do, sir?"

"Better, certainly; but——"

"But it won't quite hold water either, I suppose you mean to say, sir," said the whimsical fellow. "Well, sir, put it in another light, and say that, being in a manner set free to choose my commander for the time, I fixed upon you, Mr. Franklin, in preference to Mr. Owen. Will that do?"

"Won't it do better still, Adams," I could not help answering, "to say that, fearing I should get into some scrape, you have made up your mind to stick to me, and help me out of it if you can?"

"Do you think so, sir?" said Adams.

"I almost fancy it," said I.

"Thank you, sir, for your good opinion," replied he; "and if it should come to the proof I—I hope I shall deserve it: that's all, Mr. Franklin."

I don't know how it is, Miles, but whenever I begin to write about this mysterious sailor, I cannot stay my pen; for almost every word comes before me as fresh as when it was first spoken. I can only account for this by the services Adams has rendered me, and by the extraordinary gratitude he has returned for the kindness I once happened to show him.

While this conversation was going on, we were already out of the town on the land side, and following the tramp of the retreating soldiers; dropping now and then a shot or two at random, to quicken their flight. It formed no part of our plan,

however, to engage with these troops, but merely to keep them at a respectful distance while the work was going on at the mole and harbour.

Thus, the early dawn found our detachment at the bottom of a steepish hill, on the summit of which the enemy had halted ; and having in this way secured our compatriots at the mole from annoyance or interruption in their proceedings, we were ordered to halt too. In this position we stood till broad daylight, facing the enemy, without any movement offensive or defensive, save that of contemptuous gestures, in which I am bound to say our sailors bore away the palm.

Meanwhile, though a mile distant from the mole, we could plainly distinguish the shouts of triumph and exultation raised by our friends. Mounting a little way up the hill, we could also perceive two or three of the prizes slowly moving out of the harbour, one after another, and our frigates spreading their sails and tacking nearer to shore. All this was very tantalising to those who could only look on. Few men are equal to sailors at a rush or assault, either on their accustomed element or on land ; but they are peculiarly impatient of inactivity, and, except when in watch on deck, they make very indifferent sentries.

It was so in our case. Even our commander for the time became tired of his lazy post ; and after mounting the hill half-a-dozen times, thus exposing himself to the enemy as a kind of live target, and having twice as often pulled out his watch to see how time was going on, he fancied that he would be doing more good by returning to the mole and hurrying on the operations there, than by keeping guard over a handful of "grinning, capering mounseers," as he said. He consequently deputed his business to the next officer in command, who, being lax in his discipline, permitted the men to leave the ranks and stroll about



as they listed. Many of them took French leave altogether, and returned to the town, inspired, as it seemed, by the hope and expectation of plunder and drink; so that our force was reduced to less than a hundred men.

The enemy were not slow in perceiving this defection; and, as it afterwards appeared, they were just about this time reinforced by a detachment of soldiers from a garrison in the interior, for which an express had been sent in the night; so that they outnumbered us three to one. While, therefore, we were awaiting the signal of recall, (which was to be the blowing up of the magazine of the battery,) and were as little prepared for an attack as our foes could have desired, down they came upon us pell-mell, with so sudden and furious a charge, that no time was given us to reform our ranks. A scattered fire, which did little or no execution, was the only return we could make to a well-directed volley which made several of our brave fellows bite the dust; and then the word was given (and if it had not been given it would have been all the same) for a retreat; and in two minutes the retreat had become a precipitous flight.

"You are not hit, I hope, sir," said Adams, who through the whole night and morning had kept close by me.

"I believe not; but what do you call this, though?" I asked, as we cut over the ground at a rate you would have admired, had you seen us, Miles.

"Something like a run, sir," said he, laughing.

"Not particularly heroic, though," I puffed out.

"What signifies, Mr. Franklin?"

"'He that fights and runs away,  
Will live to fight another day,'

you know, sir."

"Yes: but we have not fought. Couldn't we make a stand, just for the look of the thing?"

I turned round as I spoke, to see that our men were scattered beyond possibility of rallying, while behind us, tramp, tramp, came our pursuers, not a hundred paces off, shouting revenge, and sending bullets after us, not quite as thick as hail-stones, certainly, but much too thick to be pleasant.

"It won't do, sir: a good pair of heels is worth ten pairs of hands just now," said my follower, who had stopped when I stopped: "try yours again, Mr. Franklin."

I slued myself round again; but, to my intense astonishment, my right leg seemed all at once paralyzed. I made one or two strenuous attempts to move forward, and then I fell.

I have only a confused remembrance of what happened afterwards. I knew that I found myself, somehow, swung upon Adams's back, and that he seemed to carry me along as though I were a mere feather's weight; that I was conscious of a dull, numbing pain gradually increasing to agony; and that I begged the good fellow to lay me down and leave me to my fate, and save himself if he could. I also recollect hearing savage shouts, and a perpetual ringing report of musket and pistol shots, and seeing one after another of the fugitives around us dropping to the ground. I recollect nothing more that happened, till I found myself in one of the boats, supported in the arms of my preserver; and then again all is a blank, till I knew I was under the hands of our surgeon, who was causing me horrible pain by probing a deep wound in my thigh, trying to extract a bullet.

But I did not know then what danger Adams had incurred in saving me from the enemy after I was struck down, and how marvellously we had both escaped the destructive fire which was poured upon us and our men as we fled through the streets, and which followed us from the beach till the last boat was beyond musket-shot. We took a few prizes, certainly; but these were

dearly purchased by the loss of more than a hundred brave fellows; and——

\* \* \* \* \*

*Postscript.*—I left off at the above a week ago; since then we have joined our fleet off Mahon; and just as I was thinking of finishing my despatch, I was told that “The Glorious” will be relieved at this station, and is ordered home to be stripped, examined, and repaired. So no more letter-writing, Miles, just yet. You will receive this by a cutter which sails to-morrow; and a month later, after an absence of two long years, I shall be once more in Old England.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### A PACKET OF LETTERS.

1. *From William Franklin to Miles Oakley, Esquire, of “The Oaks,” Oakley.*

“Spithead, on board ‘The Glorious,’ March —, 18—.

“VERY dear and honoured Sir—We came to anchor three days ago; but time has been so taken up, that until this evening I could not write even a line to let you know of our safe arrival. I am happy to say my wound that I wrote about is quite healed. The bullet dropped out of itself, and then the parts closed together. I only feel a little stiffness, which the doctor tells me will soon go off.

“The frigate will be in dock a good many months, I think; and Captain Maxwell has been so kind as to say that I may have leave of absence for two months, in consideration of having been wounded; so it has turned out all right. You may guess,

dear sir, how I long to see Oakley again, which I hope will be at the end of next week, if I have your permission to spend my leave there. May I hope to receive a few lines in reply? With ever dutiful remembrances to my kind friend, Mrs. Oakley, I am, dear sir, yours very gratefully,

“WILLIAM FRANKLIN.”

2. *From William Franklin to Miles Oakley the younger, at Saint Radigunds College.*

“Spithead, etc., etc., etc.

“My dearest Miles—I have not more than ten minutes to spare; but I must just inform you that we came to anchor three days ago, and that I am to have a run on shore—two months! Think of that. I have written by this same post to ‘The Oaks,’ and in a week or two I shall be there. You’ll meet me there, of course; for Saint Radigunds isn’t a frigate, and you can get away when you like, I dare say.

“We *must* meet, for I have lots to tell and to be told. By the way, I wish you could write me a line or two before I leave here, just to tell me how the land lies at the vicarage—you understand. So no more at present, from your affectionate

“WILLIAM FRANKLIN.”

3. *From Miles Oakley the elder to William Franklin.*

“‘The Oaks,’ March —, 18—.

“My dear Willy—My permission! My permission for you to come to your own home! Why, what can you be thinking of? and where do you think you will be welcome if not at old Oakley? Let me hear no more such nonsense, my dear boy, or I shall think you are changed indeed.

"Be sure to let me know what day we are to expect you. Mrs. Oakley says it is all nonsense; but I mean to have my way, for all that; and you are to be received with all the honours we can give to a hero just returned to his native land, and a wounded hero, too. Not make a fuss about it? Won't we, though, Willy? We'll have the bells ringing, and guns firing, and the old flag floating above the old roof-tree, and open house for all that like to come, and a barrel tapped on the green; and the old coach shall meet you at H., and bring you home in triumph. There, I did not mean to tell you anything about it; but I can't keep a secret—never could, Willy.

"I should have started off to Portsmouth to meet you, my boy; but my old enemy, the gout, has got hold of me again, and has laid me up by the heels. It has left my hand at liberty to write to you, though, and that is one comfort.

"You'll want some money, of course; so I shall put in a cheque that you can get cashed at Portsmouth. You don't say anything about prize-money; but I reckon there is not much of that comes to the share of a midshipman. Well, we don't want it, Willy.

"And now I am writing about money, I must beg of you to get a discharge for that sailor Adams, of whom you have often written. I don't know how such things are managed, but of course they are to be managed somehow; and if money can't do it, I don't know what can. Never mind how much it costs, Willy; the man has saved your life twice or three times; and if this does not give him a claim upon me, I don't know what could. Besides, he is a noble-minded fellow, you say, and above his station, and a pressed man, too, which is a great piece of injustice. I don't like that press-ganging, Willy. I am not going to stand up for too much liberty for the lower orders. Don't think it: but there ought to be a line drawn somewhere,

and that pressing system is going a trifle too far—unless, indeed, they would send a press-gang to Oakley, and snap off half a score or two of our poachers. I shouldn't complain of that.

"There never were such doings, Willy, as there have been of late. Our woods swarm with poachers, and I can hear their guns banging off as I lay in bed o' nights. That Hodge Barton, and the man Morris, at the 'Travellers' Rest,' are about the biggest — but there, every time I think about them I get a fresh twinge of the gout, and there's no need of that.

"But about your sailor, Willy. Be sure you don't forget about his discharge, and don't let him go off without a shot in his locker. Ha, ha! you see I have caught up some of your lingo! Give him—no, don't give him anything, but bring him along with you here. Mrs. Oakley wants to thank him for taking such care of you; and so, for that matter, do I. It will go hard with us if we cannot make him welcome in the servants' hall; and, hark-ye, Willy; you may just hint to him that if he has not a home on shore, he can swing his hammock at 'The Oaks' as long as he likes, and we'll find him a berth. What should you think of making a gamekeeper of him? I shall have to pension Dick Border off before long, and your man knows something about guns and dogs, I'll be bound.

"I have written you a longer letter than I meant to write, Willy, and I haven't said anything about—but never mind. There will be many things to talk about when we see you here. Bless you, my dear boy.

"P.S. I have been thinking, Willy, that I had better write a note to Captain Maxwell about Adams, and you can put it into his hands, you know." And as may be you would not like to lose him for a shipmate (I did not think of that), there may be some way of making a warrant officer of him, if he prefers sticking to the sea. If money will do it, it shall not be spared; but

we will talk about this another time : only be sure he gets his discharge.

"P.S. 2. Mrs. Oakley has been looking over what I have written, and she tells me there's one part I ought not to have written, and ought to strike out. But I know you better, Willy. You won't mind my having written so plainly about poachers. 'Tis no reproach to you, my boy, that your father went wrong that way. And as to that, you never knew him; and I have tried to do a father's duty to you. You have never known the want of a father or mother either, have you, my dear boy?"

4. *From Mrs. Oakley to William Franklin.*

"My dear Willy—The welcome tidings of your safe return have given great joy to us all; and though I shall see you so soon, I must add a few lines to what Mr. Oakley has written. He should not have put that in about the poachers; but you know he did not mean any *reflexions*.

"And oh! Willy, how could they put that cruel story into the 'Gazette,' of your being among the killed or missing? For two whole months we were in such deep sorrow, that nothing could comfort us till your letter came. Mr. Oakley roamed about like one distracted, and wouldn't be spoke to by high or low! and I went every day into the room that used to be your and Miles's nursery, and looked over all the drawers and boxes that have got your old books and playthings, till I could not see out of my eyes for crying. I never knew how dear I loved you, next to my own boy, till then, Willy. As the report of your death was false, I won't say any more about it, only to tell you that there were more wet eyes in Oakley parish than mine: and bright eyes they are, too.

"I must tell you, though, that Miles was quite distracted

when he heard of it. He could not stop at college, but came home to us ; and then he was so restless, he could not stop at home either, but would go to London, which he was let to do, but not willingly ; for London is not a good place for young men.

“I ought to tell you, that when the (false) news was told to old Mrs. Franklin at P., as we were in duty bound to do, she did not seem to understand what was said to her. The old lady is very much *off her head* at times, and says and does very strange things. But she is very comfortably off, you know ; and she has some one to take care of her now, which is proper she should. I don't suppose she will know you ; but I am sure, Willy, you will not be backward in paying her your respects when you come home ; you never were, and I should not like it should be said of you, that you are grown too proud to own your natural relations.

“I think this is what I most of all meant to have said at first ; but it has come last. And, hoping to see you in good health, and happy, and grown to be a fine young man, as I have no doubt you are,

“I am, dear Willy,

“Your loving friend and next to mother,

“LUCY OAKLEY.

“P.S.—Take care of your poor hurt leg in travelling.”

5. *From Miles Oakley the younger to William Franklin.*

“Dear Willy—I haven't a moment to write, for I am just off with Lord Blatterbane, to draw a badger. So all I shall say is, ‘Welcome back to England, old boy!’ I shall be sure to see you at ‘The Oaks ;’ but you must come up to Saint Radigunds, and have some sport with us here. 'Tis so uncommon dull at ‘The Oaks’ at this season.



"I don't know anything about the vicarage, so there is nothing I can tell you, only that when I was home last—but no, I won't tell you, for 'tis all stuff. You will see how the land lies, as you say, for yourself.

"Yours,

"MILES OAKLEY.

"P.S.—You need not say anything at 'The Oaks' about Lord Blatterbane, because they don't like to hear about him. You understand."

6. *From William Franklin to Miles Oakley, Esquire, of  
"The Oaks," Oakley.*

"Portsmouth, April —, 18—.

"Very dear and honoured Sir—Your welcome letter reached me on Monday last, and I would have replied at an earlier date, only I thought it better to wait until I could inform you certainly of the day on which I shall travel. It is fixed now that I shall leave here on Thursday next, by the stage coach to London. I shall not wish to stay there more than one night, and shall take the next coach to H., where I shall most likely land, wind and weather permitting, about three in the afternoon of the same day, which will be Friday.

"Be assured, honoured sir, that I feel your great kindness more than words can express; and I will not ask you not to be at so much trouble in receiving me, because I know it will give you pleasure. I hope I may never prove ungrateful for your extraordinary generosity to a poor fatherless fellow, to whom you have returned so much good for so much baseness. I must not write more about this, however, because you have forbidden me.

"Many thanks for the cheque inclosed in your letter. It was

a great deal more than I have had any occasion for : but I got it cashed, as you desired ; and you will not be displeased at my having given a dinner on shore (at the ' Blue Posts ' ) to some of my messmates. It would have delighted you to see how merry we all were ; but I did not dip too deeply into my purse, I hope, and we did not exceed the bounds of moderation. You remember, honoured sir, how you sometimes laughed at me for leaving the bottle ; and I am not altered in this respect.

"To come to other particulars, I have to tell you, sir, that I put your letter to Captain Maxwell into his own hands, and that he was very good-natured about it, and said that though he was loth to part with a good seaman like Adams, he would see what could be done by application to higher quarters. So, two days afterwards he sent for me, and gave me a written discharge to give to Adams.

"Which thing I did on the same day, and told him what you had written about his going with me to 'The Oaks,' and also about the gamekeeper's place which he might have. Adams seemed very much taken by surprise, and was so agitated for a time that he could not speak. No doubt this was occasioned by the unexpectedness of his discharge. At last, however, he thanked me very heartily for my thoughtfulness of him (he ought to have said yours, but he was quite excited), and said he was glad to get his discharge honourably, but hoped it had not cost anything in money, which I could not tell him. He declined the offer of going home with me, saying that he had other work cut out for him, but that he should see me again before long, and that then he might have something more to say to me than at present. I could not persuade him otherwise ; and when I made him an offer of money, he refused it, saying that when he received his pay he should have as much as he wanted. This was all I could get out of him, for he seemed

very reserved, as he always has been about himself; but we parted very friendly; and if I never see him again, I shall always remember the services he has done me.

"As to prize-money, there will be a little coming to my share some day; but nothing has been adjudged by the Admiralty Court at present.

"Having nothing more to say of importance till we meet, and with my most dutiful remembrances to Mrs. Oakley, and thanks for the loving letter she wrote to me, I am, dear sir, your affectionate

"WILLIAM FRANKLIN."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE YOUNG MIDSHIPMAN'S RETURN TO OAKLEY; AND HIS RECEPTION THERE.

HOME, home!

With a bounding heart, and light and joyous, Franklin took his seat on the London coach that April morning. Almost everything in his experience and prospects tended to this state of feeling. His retrospect was not gloomy; he liked his profession; it had sufficient charms for an adventurous spirit; and the tedium of long hard service and disappointed hopes had not yet damped his ardour nor belied his expectations. He had done his duty, too, and he stood fair in the estimation of his superiors, while he had won the attachment of his messmates. If he had passed through some dangers, he had escaped: and even an occasional twinge of tenderness in his wounded limb did no more than send a thrill of gratified honest pride through his heart; he would not have been without that pleasurable sensation.

In the more remote past of his life there was nothing to mar, very greatly at least, the present happiness of our young hero. The strokes which had been inflicted on his fortunes in his early childhood had left no scars behind: they were beyond the reach of even his faintest remembrance. Don't blame the boy that he cared so little about parents whom he did not recollect, and who, by all accounts, had cared so little for him. It would have been pretty much the same with you or me, reader; especially if traditionary report or natural conjecture had made forgetfulness and oblivion almost a filial duty. No—in Franklin's remembrances of the past, his parents had no share. But there was the old mansion which had sheltered him in his childhood, and been his boyhood's home; there was the hearty old squire, peremptory enough and vehement in his ways, but who had been always kind to him, as he was essentially kind to all his dependants; there was the gentle and loving mistress of "The Oaks," who had taken him to her heart as well as to her home, and whose beaming smiles and pleasant words and motherly deeds had made his young days almost perpetual sunshine; and there was Miles, his foster-brother, his playmate and companion. In memories such as these, there was no taint of bitterness; and, we may add, no shade of remorse.

With all these memories, be sure there was mixed up that of one girlish face and form, which two full years of absence had not obliterated. Was there pain in this remembrance? No, not much. Franklin was two years older than when he had, with such enforced resignation, protested that he knew his case to be hopeless. Hopeless he never had been in his secret heart. A man's honest and pure affections towards any fair Eve never long survive the utter extinction of all hope—if he be a true man; and if Franklin had not indulged some secret expectation that time, patience, perseverance, and eventual

success in his course of life, would overcome the difficulties which he knew to stand in his way, he would have thought but little more of Ellen Murray. That he did think of her as the coach rolled along, and that the thought was more pleasurable than painful, proved, even to himself, that hope and determination to win the prize of his life were in high feather just then.

Franklin was thinking, then, of——well, he would have said, of “lots of things,” past, present, and to come, when (about four miles out of Portsmouth) the coach pulled up at a low-roofed roadside inn, having an anchor for its sign; and out of the doorway of “The Anchor” stepped a man in blue jacket and white slops, with a small bundle in his hand, and evidently intending to board the coach. One look was enough.

“Hillo! Adams!”

“Ay, ay, Mr. Franklin! all right, sir.”

“Tumble up here, Adams; there’s plenty of room,” said our young reefer, who sat on the front seat of the coach, as the sailor was swinging himself up behind. This order or invitation was immediately obeyed.

“I am glad you have changed your mind, Adams,” said Franklin; “you mean to go down with me to Oakley, after all?”

“No, sir; no farther than London. I have got some friends to look up, Mr. Franklin; and I thought I might as well start off at once; so I came out as far as this last night, and slept at ‘The Anchor,’ so as to get the first chance of a lift on the road.”

The coach drove on, and the long journey——(it was a long day’s journey at that time from Portsmouth to London)——this long journey was beguiled by conversation which need not be recorded. It is sufficient to say, that being now “on equal

terms," as Adams had once said, on an occasion which the reader will remember, intercourse was more untrammelled between the old sailor and the young officer, than it had ever been on board ship; and though the respect of the former was not diminished, his conscious inferiority was, to Franklin's great satisfaction, lost sight of. The young midshipman was, moreover, surprised at the extent of general information possessed by his companion. A more discriminating judge would have discovered, perhaps, that there was nothing very profound in either the knowledge or the views of the sailor: but to Franklin these were novel and entertaining; and this was enough.

It appeared that Adams had passed some years in America, or rather, in the merchant service of that country; and he contrasted with much freedom and some bitterness, (which Franklin thought natural and pardonable in an impressed seaman,) the greater amount of liberty enjoyed in the young and flourishing commonwealth, with the tyranny of government and unequal loads so slavishly borne by the people of the old worn-out country. The man waxed warm as he spoke of his own wrongs, of which his young auditor had himself been witness; and instanced other glaring, or what *he* called glaring, instances of persecution by unjust laws, the administration of which was enough (so he said) to make a man's blood boil within him. Franklin had never heard such heresies before; and he was incompetent to meet them with argument, much less to refute them. He turned the subject, therefore, into another channel, and asked Adams if it was in America that he met with the man Jem Green, the deserter?

Adams visibly started at the mention of the name, and answered confusedly, "Yes—no—yes;" then recovering himself—"That is to say, Mr. Franklin, I knew the man in America; but I did not first meet him there."

"You said you would some day tell me how you became acquainted with him," said Franklin.

"Not now, sir," said the man, hastily and abruptly; "the time will come—that is, if we should ever see one another again; and if we don't; why I should not like your thoughts of me to be mixed up with that story: no, sir."

It was late at night when the coach reached London; and Franklin was not sorry to find that he could sleep at the "Bolt-in-Tun," where the coach ultimately rested its old wooden bones. He insisted on Adams taking a bed there too: and, without entering on farther particulars, it is sufficient to say that our young hero took an early coach the next morning for H. in Berkshire, parting with Adams at the coach office.

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Home, home!

As Franklin drew nearer and nearer to H. every mile seemed ten, and every ten minutes an hour. At length the coach entered the outskirts of the old town, rattled through its narrow and badly paved streets, and drew up at the "Crown and Sceptre." The next instant the young traveller was clasping hands with his friend and foster-brother, who had rushed from the inn-door on the first sound of the coach-wheels.

"Didn't expect me, did you, Willy? All right though; squire sent an express to Saint Radigunds for me to do you honour, old boy; couldn't come here himself because of the gout—as savage as a bear because he couldn't—never mind. I say, there, you fellows, out with my horses, will you, and put 'em to. Glad to see you, old fellow; why, how well you look! where's your luggage, though? I say, you lazy fellows: why don't you move? Get the luggage out, can't you? What are you going to have, though, Willy? Come in here; I've got a private room, and have ordered up some lunch; we must have some-

thing, you know, before we start. Come along; the fellows there will see to the luggage."

And presently the old family coach, drawn by four fast-trotting bays, and with boxes strapped on the top, started off with a wonderful rattle from the "Crown and Sceptre," the landlord of which stood obsequiously bowing the while. And within were the two young men, each with an arm thrown over the other's shoulder, and looking into each other's eyes with old affection rekindled. Happy friendship! will it ever be cooled, demolished, changed into envy, hatred, malice? Let us hope not.

And so they entered Oakley, and drove up to the old hall; and there were firing of guns, and ringing of bells, and drinking of healths that night. Even as the old squire had determined things should be, so they were. Let us hope that true thankfulness was under the abundant joy.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE COTTAGE FARM AT P. RECEIVES AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

THE little cottage farm at P. (of which we had a partial glimpse in the first part of our story) had become, in process of time, wonderfully snug and comfortable. With continued help coming in from an unknown source, through Peake, the lawyer, and with no one to interfere with her proceedings after the mysterious departure of her daughter-in-law and an old servant, Mrs. Franklin had soon resumed her activity and good housewifery. Her sorrow for the desolation she had experienced was, no doubt, sincere and deep; but she did not

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suffer it to eat like a canker, and, stimulated by success in her small way, she gradually became reconciled to her lot, and wisely determined to make the best of it. We fear it must be allowed that there was a good deal of selfishness in the old woman's composition. Her son was lost to her, past recall; her daughter had chosen to dissociate herself from her; and her grandson, for whom, as we have seen, she had no very ardent affection, had been taken off her hands; and thus left alone, her thoughts and efforts became more and more concentrated towards self. Happy in her returning prosperity she can scarcely be said to have been; but there is a kind of self-satisfaction which, with numberless people in the world, takes the place of happiness: and this Mrs. Franklin had.

She was as strong, hale, and hearty at sixty-five as many women are at fifty, and with a determined will she set about repairing her broken fortunes. She succeeded. Her dairy of two cows increased in time to six: her poultry-yard could boast of the best and choicest breeds in all the country round—not chosen for the beauty of plumage, however, but for their facility in fattening and their productiveness in eggs. Her acre or two of grazing-ground had been added to by a fresh hiring of several adjacent meadows as her requirements increased; and these fed not only her cows but a little flock of sheep, which had latterly numbered a full score. What, therefore, with her constant market for butter, eggs, and poultry; periodical dealings with a neighbouring butcher for five or six calves, and thrice as many lambs in the course of the year; the annual clip of wool from her standing flock; and with no large expenses to keep down or eat up her profits, Mrs. Franklin could scarcely be otherwise than prosperous. Under any ordinary circumstances she would almost certainly have saved money; but, taking into consideration the constant help already referred to, and the lowness of

rent paid for her small farm, there could be no doubt that, in a modest way, Mrs. Franklin had grown rich.

None more heartily rejoiced in these evidences of prosperity than the squire of Oakley and his kind-hearted spouse. The reader knows, though Mrs. Franklin did not, that to them the foundation of her new fortunes, as well as the quarterly supplies of cash, was to be traced ; and we all know that it is pleasant to look on the work of one's own hands. Besides, Miles Oakley felt in his innermost heart, that justice is most seemly when tempered with mercy ; and he could think with more complacency of the deserved punishment dealt out by his means to the son, when he contemplated the results of his benevolence to the mother. We desire to draw attention here, as we have previously drawn it towards this characteristic of Miles Oakley, in order to account for what would seem to be an unnatural excess of generosity in his dealings with the younger Franklin, whom we have left for a short time only to the hospitalities of his stately home.

To return to the elderly Mrs. Franklin and her small farm. It was pleasant to see, not only the signs of prosperity around her dwelling, but the apparent comfort which reigned within. On the defection, or disappearance of Letty and Martha, (after a short interval spent in remorseful grief and unavailing regret,) she took to herself a handmaiden some fourteen years old to assist her in her home duties. We are bound, as faithful chroniclers, to record that the place was a hard place, and the mistress an exacting mistress. But the girl was kept in order, and so was the house ; and though from year to year one help departed and another came, Mrs. Franklin had such an excellent capability of ruling, that every new arrival for the time being, however unpromising in previous training and temper, was soon reduced to obedience and compelled to industry.

For several years these small and young assistants were all

that the energetic woman required, except the occasional labour of a man in any press of heavy work on the farm. But at three-score and ten, as Mrs. Franklin's bodily activity began to fail, and her possessions to increase, she found it not only desirable, but necessary to keep a man constantly employed at day wages. But, to compensate for this abstraction from her hoardings, which grieved her not a little till she found it coming back to her in increasing profits, she determined thenceforth to resume the distaff herself; in other words, to dismiss her female attendant, and be once more her own servant.

One evening, about two years prior to the date to which we have brought down our history, and when Mrs. Franklin was at least seventy years of age, her kitchen door opened, and a woman entered with a heavy bundle in her hand, but such as a strong female might carry some distance on her arm.

Mrs. Franklin was at this time seated by her fire, her day's work done, and she, probably, nodding with sleepiness and fatigue. The intruder had therefore time to advance to the fireplace and seat herself in a chair opposite to the mistress of the house without interruption—having taken the precaution of closing gently after her the door by which she had entered.

Mrs. Franklin started from her momentary doze, stared first at the uninvited guest, then at the bundle, which the woman had placed on the floor, and then spoke.

"You seem to make yourself quite at home, mistress," said she, in a tone of mingled curiosity and anger.

Certainly the stranger did seem to make herself quite at home; for, without immediately replying to the salutation, she took off her black silk bonnet, divested herself of her scarlet, large-hooded, short cloak, rose from her usurped seat, hung these articles of attire on an unoccupied peg, then coolly sat down again, and replied—

"I don't know where I should make myself at home if it is not here. Don't you know me, mistress?"

The aged woman started at the sound of the voice, rose hastily from her arm-chair, crossed the space between with tottering steps, and laid her shaking hands, one on each shoulder of the visitor, and gazed earnestly at her countenance.

"It isn't Martha White, is it?" she gasped, with faltering voice.

"Yes, mistress: I am Martha, your old Martha, you know."

"But—where do you come from?" Agitated thoughts came too thick and confused for utterance, as tremblingly she fell back to her chair, and panted for breath.

The intruder was silent.

"They—they told me you were—were dead," said the old woman at last, venturing to look up once more at the visitor.

"But I am not dead, you see, mistress: and the long and short of it is, I am come back to my old place. You'll have me, I know."

What more passed between the two women is not necessary to be set down. It is enough to say, that from that day the cottage had two occupants, and that not gradually, but directly and spontaneously, Martha White stepped into her old position, that of a faithful and self-denying, but self-willed and ruling domestic servant, or rather companion, and that Mrs. Franklin subsided as suddenly into the grumbling but submissive mistress.

We must not omit to tell, however, that the return of the long-missed woman caused considerable sensation in the village and neighbourhood. It was indeed natural, and almost unavoidable, that people should inquire what had become of the partner of Martha's flight, and where the intervening years of her life had been spent. These questions threatened to be

troublesome, and even serious in their consequences, until Martha took a decisive step, which silenced, if it did not satisfy, all inquirers.

Our readers will not have forgotten a certain Mr. Melburn, a neighbouring magistrate. To him—about a week after her return—Martha White openly repaired, and after a short private interview retired, and wended her way homeward. From that time forth, when inconvenient or impertinent questions were put to her, her invariable reply was, that Mr. Melburn knew “all about it;” and if the anxious inquirers chose to apply to that gentleman, that gentleman would satisfy them—as far as he thought proper.

There was one other person, however, to whom it was supposed the secret of Martha’s wanderings had been confided. This was Mrs. Oakley, who still kept up frequent intercourse with the cottage; and as she seemed satisfied with the explanations she received, the nine days’ wonder soon ceased, and Martha White remained unmolested.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### ANOTHER VISITOR AT THE FARM.

**T**wo years passed away; and Mrs. Franklin, who had greatly failed in bodily strength, and still more in intellect, depended more and more upon Martha White for assistance in her daily business, but at the same time became increasingly captious, exacting, and suspicious. And it will not be out of place to record here one scene out of many, which will exhibit both women in a characteristic light to the reader.

. It was the evening of an April day, which had been chequered

with its proverbial showers and sunshine. The out-of-door work was done, and Martha, after preparing the usual frugal supper for her mistress and herself, drew near to the hearth, beside which Mrs. Franklin had been pretty nearly a fixture through the entire day. Before seating herself, however, Martha added three or four stout logs to the fire, which had sunk low between the iron dogs, which in those days, and in country houses, where much wood and little or no coal was consumed, answered the purpose of the modern grate.

"Martha!" said the ancient dame, in a tone of remonstrance and peevish excitement, "you mean to ruin me out of house and home."

"It is as well to be comfortable while we can, mistress," returned Martha, composedly. "It is damp and chilly to-night, and we shall be both of us the better for a cheerful blaze."

"You think of nothing but your comfort," murmured the old woman; "it is little enough you think of mine."

The younger woman must have been used to such reproaches as this, for she answered calmly, "You know better than that, mistress; but we won't make words; shall I take the bits of sticks off again?"

"No, let them bide now; there's more where they come from, I suppose. Where are you going now?" This question was caused by Martha's rising from her seat and walking towards a door which led into a wash-house, which also opened into the dairy.

"There was a knock at the back door: didn't you hear it?" and, not waiting for the answer, Martha disappeared. She was gone a few minutes.

"Who was it, Martha?" demanded the mistress, when Martha returned.

"Nobody in particular, mistress: only Mary Elliot."

"And what did she want, Martha? what did she come about?"

"She wanted some eggs, and I promised she should have them to-morrow," said Martha.

"She can't have them; she shan't have them; we can't spare them, Martha. You had no business to promise them without asking leave," piped the old dame, in great agitation.

"Nonsense, mistress; there's plenty of eggs; and we may as well let a neighbour have them as send them to market; and as to asking leave to attend to your business, why, I have had that long ago, you know."

After this there was a long silence, broken presently by Martha.

"There's been great doings at 'The Oaks,' mistress."

"What's 'The Oaks,' Martha?"

"Well, to be sure! why, you know 'The Oaks,' mistress—where Squire Oakley lives? You know Mrs. Oakley, anyhow, that calls to see you so often?"

"She as come for the eggs, Martha?"

Martha made no reply to this. "Your grandson is come home from sea, mistress; and there has been bell-ringing, and gun-firing, and nobody knows what besides, to make him welcome home."

"Oh! my grandson?" The tone in which this was uttered indicated almost entire obliviousness of the past, and almost complete obscuration of intellect as to the present.

"William Franklin, you know; may-be he'll be coming to see you some of these days," continued Martha.

"No, no, he is a long way off," said the aged woman, a gleam of consciousness irradiating for a moment her darkened mind, at the sound of the old familiar name, and bringing back the memory of her lost son; but it was only for a moment. A

matter of more immediate interest occupied what can scarcely be called her thoughts—let us say her instincts.

“Them eggs, Martha; was you paid for ’em?”

“No, mistress, to be sure not. They won’t be had till to-morrow.”

“Oh, to-morrow; pick out the little ’uns, Martha.”

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An hour passed away—more than an hour. Mrs. Franklin had been assisted by her attendant to her chamber, and was fast asleep. Martha returning to the kitchen, sat sorrowfully looking into the fire, and tracing in its half-consumed and bright red brands fanciful images of things that never had been and never would be, till her eyes filled with tears. Then, hastily rising, she reached down a well-worn Bible from its shelf, and opened it on the table before her. She snuffed the candle, and read.

Gradually her countenance brightened, for her thoughts and feelings brightened, expanded, soared away. The Comforter was near to that poor disciple of the meek and lowly One, and through clouds of ignorance and sorrow poured in light and peace. Late taught to know Him whom to know is life eternal, she had learned also to cast her cares upon Him who cared for her.

Two hours had passed away; the old clock in the corner struck ten, and warned the reader that it was time for her to seek her chamber, when a soft hesitating tap at the window made her start—not with alarm, for Martha was stout-hearted—but with surprise.

“Somebody is taken ill”—this was her first thought—“and wants help. It is a good thing I was not gone to bed;” and she rose, drew back the bolt, and opened the door.

The night was so dark, cloudy, and starless, that Martha did



not at first perceive a man, who stood without ; nor did she see him till she heard a strange husky voice——

“ Martha White.”

She was very near upon screaming ; but she did not.

“ Who is it, and what do you want ? ”

“ I am a poor wanderer ; I want food and shelter. Will you give them ? ”

“ I dare not. I have no right to give what is not mine ; but—— but you mentioned my name : if you are a stranger, how did you know it ? ”

“ I do not say I am a stranger ; I come from a long way off—— beyond seas ; I knew of you over there. May I come in ? I will go again if you tell me that I must.”

Bewildered, confused, unable to reply, with one thought, or conjecture, or suspicion, overpowering and bearing down every other feeling, Martha opened the door wider. The man entered, closed the door after him, secured it with the bolt, then drew near to the embers of the fire.

He was a man considerably past middle age, as it seemed ; the hat he wore low down over his forehead, and which he did not at first remove, concealed his hair and shaded his eyes ; but it did not hide his haggard cheeks, nor the grey bristles of several days' growth, which fringed his pale lips and hung thick upon his chin. His hands, as he clasped them together, showed themselves to be hard and knotted, and embrowned with toil ; but they trembled so violently that they could scarcely retain their grasp of each other. He was dressed well enough, in the ordinary garb of a country labouring man ; and, whatever might be his distress, an observer would not have attributed it to poverty.

“ You do not know me, then, Martha ? ” said the man, after standing for a moment or two in silence.



**"YOU DO NOT KNOW ME, THEN, MARTHA?"**



The woman did not reply : with straining eyes, gasping lips, and blanched cheeks, she stood, holding on to the table for support. Only a deep-drawn hysterical sob escaped from her. A timely relief ! but for that she would have swooned.

The man slowly removed his hat, and threw back, with a motion of his hand, the long thin hair which fell over his forehead. It was enough.

"My master ! my dear old master ! my good, my innocent, my poor persecuted, suffering master !" The words gushed out amidst cries, and sobs, and tears ! Then she was on her knees before him, clasping his knees—kissing his very feet in her wild delirium ; then she had risen and clasped him in her arms ; then she was resting her head on his shoulder.

"My poor William, whom I have known from a boy ! My old, kind friend, whom I witnessed against ! Oh, forgive me ! forgive me !"

The man's strength and fortitude forsook him at last. His hands dropped heavily to his sides ; his knees trembled ; he staggered like a drunken man, and would have fallen, but that Martha for an instant supported him, and assisted him to the vacant arm-chair by the fire-side. Then the returned wanderer covered his face with his hands, and groaned deeply, while big scalding tears escaped between his fingers, and coursed one another down his furrowed cheeks.

The woman was the first to recover presence of mind.

"Master William, you are come back, as I always thought you would ; but"—and here she sunk her voice to a whisper—"it is before the time ; the twenty years isn't up ; and you have come back in the dark of the night. Is there any danger ? Will any harm come of it, if it is known you are about ?"

"I should be hanged like a dog : that's all, Martha," said the returned convict, calmly.

"Then there *is* danger; I thought as much; and there are prying eyes about. Does any one know of your being in these parts, or in England?"

"Nobody but Morris, of 'The Travellers' Rest.' I was obliged to put up somewhere; and I put up there last night. I did not mean to let him know who I was, and I thought I was so altered that he wouldn't have found me out; but he did: and he helped me to the clothes I have got on. I am not afraid of his splitting upon me. There's honour among thieves, you know, Martha," said the man, bitterly.

Martha did not reply. Perhaps she did not hear; for, while her old master was speaking, she was busy hanging her cloak over the already curtained window, so as to exclude every ray of light from any chance of escape. In like manner she covered up the door, after jealously examining its fastenings, and drew a thick curtain across the inner doorway, with the same careful intent. "If a light should chance to be seen so late about the house, people will begin to wonder," she said; "and that's the first thing towards finding out a secret. Oh! my poor, poor master! to think that there should ever be a need of keeping you in hiding!"

Not until she had satisfied herself that these precautions were successful did Martha give a thought to the probable needs of her returned master. But soon more logs were heaped upon the hearth, a table was spread with food, a jug of new milk from the dairy was placed beside it, and the guest was told to eat and drink. Then did Martha sit down opposite him, and fairly give way to a flood of honest tears, which unspeakably relieved her.

Meanwhile, the wanderer tried to eat; but it was little more than a pretence. At length he impatiently pushed away his plate.

Not until then did either of them speak. Martha was the first to open her lips.

"You are not come home alone, William? Where is my own Letty?"

The man half rose, then fell back in his chair.

"Oh, what have I done? What have I said?" cried poor Martha, alarmed at the ghastly change which spread over the countenance of her old master.

The shock (if there had been a shock) was transitory in its effects, however. In a few seconds the man recovered sufficiently to hear from old Martha what the reader will presently learn.

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Far into the early morning did Martha and her secret visitor sit conversing in low and guarded tones—except when an occasional sudden burst of surprise or indignation from the man overpowered caution. It was three o'clock before the conference ended; then, warned by the near approach of dawn, Martha stole upstairs and prepared her own bed for the weary traveller, taking care to draw the window-blinds close, and to caution the guest not to approach the window or leave the room, nor to stir in it till she gave him leave. After this she descended to the kitchen, extinguished the candle, wrapped herself in a blanket, and, making a temporary couch of three chairs and some cushions, tried to compose herself to sleep: but sleep would not come.

A few hours later, on entering the chamber, Martha was alarmed by the altered appearance of the fugitive's countenance. His eyes were glassy, wandering, and wanting in intelligence. His cheeks were flushed, and his brow and lips parched. The man lay tossing uneasily on his bed, and deep groans burst from him at intervals, as from one in great bodily suffering.

Martha spoke to him, but received no answer; she took his hand in her own: it was burning hot; she felt his pulse: it was sharp and rapid.

"Fever!" she whispered to herself.

It *was* fever: how brought on it was not difficult to guess. The man had travelled on foot several days—had slept at night in strange and probably damp beds, at cheap lodging-houses—had passed the previous day, or many hours of it, in the woods, where he had been soaked with the April showers: added to this, his mind was agitated. No wonder he had fever, and that the fever had affected the brain.

Martha was a brave little woman, and her mind was active and fertile in resources. She had no great amount of medical knowledge: but she had some; for we may let out so much of her secret as to say, that during her many years' absence she had been for some time a hospital nurse. But, better than imperfect medical knowledge, she had common sense; and she had sense enough to exercise it, which is exactly what some persons have not. We may therefore leave the poor patient to her care.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

MARTHA'S PERPLEXITIES, AND HOW SHE GOT THROUGH THEM—  
WILLY FRANKLIN MEETS WITH THE SOLUTION OF A MYSTERY.

THE circumstances in which Martha found herself so suddenly and unexpectedly placed were both onerous and embarrassing. Her master—for so she considered the occupant of her chamber—was seriously ill: this she knew; and yet she dared not send for a doctor; she dared not even have it known that the

cottage contained a guest. For a minute or two she had debated with herself whether she ought not to let her old mistress know of her son's return ; but she soon dismissed the thought. "The poor old lady wouldn't understand it ; or if she did for one minute, it would be all gone from her the next ; and I should not know how to manage her at all, if she were to find out that there is anybody in the house besides our two selves." So the old servant argued within herself.

Fortunately for Martha's determination to keep the secret in her own bosom, old Mrs. Franklin was too infirm to go about the cottage ; it was as much as she could do—with Martha's help—to descend from her own room in the morning, and to crawl upstairs at night ; she was somewhat hard of hearing, also ; so there was no great difficulty in keeping her in ignorance. Fortunately, too, Martha's chamber was at the back of the cottage, overlooking a tolerably large garden, into which no one but herself often entered. There was not much danger, therefore, from that quarter, nor of any sounds in it being heard by chance callers in the kitchen.

So, with a stout, brave heart, and a determination not to betray the unhappy man, she set about the work which had fallen upon her hands and heart and head. And if, like another Martha we read of, she was cumbered with many things, it was because she could not help it. How she contrived to get through it all, in that terribly anxious time, when life or death seemed to depend—as far as human means were concerned—on her own strength and wit, she was at a loss afterwards to explain ; but she did get through it.

"That's a precious promise," she said afterwards, with grateful tears streaming down her withered cheeks—"and it is a true one too—'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass ; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.' I found it so, I am sure. Iron and



brass they needed to be, and iron and brass they were; and the merciful God put strength into me, I know."

At any rate, Martha bore up wonderfully through it all. She had her own particular griefs, too; for that conversation or conference with her poor patient, on the night of his return, had opened up old wounds and inflicted fresh ones. But she strove not to think of these (save when she prayed), and laid herself out in the performance of her present duty. So she nursed the unhappy wanderer, prepared him cooling drinks, sat by his side in the day-time, as often as she could without being missed, a minute or two at a time, and sat up with him night after night, taking such snatches of sleep as she could; and elsewhere soothing with whispered words his disturbed mind. So, also, she waited on her old unconscious mistress, and bore with double patience her querulous, captious temper, and her childish fancies. So, too, she bustled about the cottage, churned her butter for market, looked after the man out of doors, answered all sorts of callers on all sorts of business, dealt with higglers who called for fowls, chatted with the butcher who came to look at the calves, packed up her butter and eggs, and sent them to market, and did more besides than can be set down here. And in the midst of it all, no one would have guessed—no one did guess—that she had a ponderous secret weighing on her mind.

It happened only two days after her old master's return, that Martha saw coming up the road on horseback, a young man in naval uniform, whom she recognised at once as Mrs. Franklin's grandson. Stopping at the gate, he alighted, threw his bridle over the garden pales, and strode up to the kitchen door. Martha met him there.

The young man started as soon as the door was opened. "Hillo!" he exclaimed, with a frank and hearty laugh, which did Martha good to hear—it was so honest and good-natured—

"why, you are the craft that grappled me in Mrs. Judkins's shop that time—aren't you?"

"You remember me, then, sir, do you?"

"Remember! I should think so. It isn't likely I should forget such a broadside as you gave me." And Willy laughed again merrily.

"A broadside, sir?"

"—Of kisses; you won't pretend that you didn't do that, I should think."

"Oh," said Martha, laughing a little in turn, "I beg your pardon I am sure, sir; I could not help it, you see; and you were only a boy then. But it did not offend you, I hope."

"Offend! No, it must be something different from that to offend me. But, I say, you are not going to do it again, are you?"

"I couldn't think of it, sir; you are a man now, you see; and that makes all the difference. But if you would not mind shaking hands with me——"

They shook hands heartily.

"But I didn't expect to find you here, though," said Willy; "Mrs. Oakley told me I should find some one besides my grandmother; but she didn't tell me—I don't know how she could have told me, though, because she never knew of your having tackled me in that way," added he, recollecting himself.

"I have lived with your grandmother almost ever since you went to sea, sir; and I used to live with her years and years ago."

"Ah, so Mrs. Oakley told me: and, now you mention my grandmother, how is the good old lady? I came over to see her, and not you, you know." And Willy laughed again at his own little joke, as he walked indoors without further ceremony.

Mrs. Franklin did not know her grandson; but he was

prepared for this, and he chatted to her for a full half-hour, while his horse was pawing a hole in the ground outside the gate, impatient to be off. Meanwhile Martha had disappeared; she had slipped upstairs, to see that her patient was all safe, and to keep him quiet, lest the murmuring sound of his voice, though too feeble to make any impression on the senses of her old mistress, might reach the quicker ears of the young man. In fact, Willy did hear the distant sound of a man's voice, as though in complaint or remonstrance; but he neither knew nor cared whence it came.

Presently this ceased, and Martha returned. Her countenance betrayed nothing of the struggle that was going on within; for, oh what would she not have given could she then have brought father and son face to face, and heart to heart?

"But it will come in time—in God's own good time," she said to herself. And it did come in God's good time; but that time was not quite yet, though not far distant.

So Willy rode away presently, promising to come again and again before returning to his ship.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

MARTHA ALARMED; BUT FINDS THAT BAD IS NOT IN EVERY CASE ALTOGETHER BAD.

MARTHA'S care and good nursing succeeded. There was once, however, when her heart almost failed, and she thought that, at all hazards, she must send for a doctor for her poor master. It was at the crisis of the fever; and through the whole night her patient was so violent and turbulent that she

could scarcely restrain him. Martha was thankful that it was in the night, when her old mistress was sound asleep, and her unsuspecting neighbours were asleep too; and that a little before dawn, the patient, worn out by his struggles and his delirium, sank into a doze, and subsided at last into deep and regular slumber. He slept till noon, and then awoke to calmness and quiet. The fever had passed away, and left him as weak as an infant, certainly, but free from disease.

Strength returned, but slowly, so that three or four weeks transpired before the patient could do more than walk feebly across the room. All this time Martha was tormented with apprehensions of her secret being discovered. Her poor master's appetite was keen and constant; and numberless were the manœuvres to which the anxious and watchful nurse was driven, to supply him with food without raising the suspicion of her mistress. "I hadn't any scruple," she afterwards said, "in feeding him with the best we had about the house, and in killing a fowl for him every other day, and giving him eggs and milk as many and as much as he wanted; for it was all his by rights. But it wanted a deal of management to do the cooking and such like, after poor old mistress was gone to bed at night, or before she was up in the morning; besides the sharp look-out she kept after her worldly goods, as far as she could."

The fear of her mistress making a premature discovery was not Martha's chief torment, however. The man Morris, of the "Travellers' Rest," was perpetually before her eyes. He was a bad man, she knew; and what was there that such a man as he would not do for the sake of gain? This constant dread was brought to a climax when, one evening after dusk, Morris made his appearance at the cottage, during the period of the sick man's slow recovery.

"You need not try to deceive me, mistress," said he, after

some considerable parleying in the garden, into which he had been hurried by poor Martha. "Bill Franklin is hiding about somewheres, I know ; and I can give a pretty good guess where : so you may as well let me into the secret."

"And if there is a secret, why should you wish to know it, Mr. Morris?" asked the brave-hearted woman ; and she lifted up her heart to God for wisdom to help her in this strait.

"Well, then," said the man, "if it comes to that, I don't want to know the secret ; I had better not know it, may-be. But you can tell me one thing, mistress, without doing any harm. Do you know where Bill Franklin is at this time ? and can you reach him, wherever he is ? Yes or no—plump."

The answer came ; and Martha ever afterwards believed that it was given her in that hour and in that minute what to say : "I do know where my poor master is ; and I can get to him if there's any occasion."

"That's enough," said the man, with a laugh ; "and I'll say this for you ; you are a true-hearted lass. I don't want any more of you ; but I want these pretty things to be put into Bill Franklin's own hand : hold out yours, mistress ;" and he dropped, one after another, five guineas into Martha's palm—"he may be glad of them : and please to tell Bill, or let him be told, that they are a free gift—do ye hear?"

"Yes, oh yes."

"Heed, then, and let him know something else ; and be sure of it, yourself, my dear. You look upon me as a hardened old rascal, I dare say, and up to everything that's bad. You need not say no, for I can see it in your looks, my dear, though there isn't much light to see it by. And, more than this, you are right enough ; and I have done things in my time that would make your hair stand on end to hear, likely enough. But—make your mind easy, mistress—before I'd turn traitor I'd have

my tongue out by the roots. And if you don't believe it when I say it, I am ready to swear it."

"God bless you and reward you! I do believe you, Mr. Morris," was all Martha could say. And when she looked round again the man was gone.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### FURTHER EXPLANATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

"TELL me all about it again, Martha, for it has gone away from me—a good deal of it at least—since that night."

William Franklin—for, at the risk of confusing him with the young sailor, we must now give back to the father his rightful name—William Franklin, then, was seated by the kitchen fire, clothed, and composed in his countenance, though still showing traces of his recent illness. It was night; for this was the only time in which he could talk with Martha undisturbed, or without fear of discovery: and as soon as his strength had permitted him, he had stolen down nightly to the kitchen, after his mother was in bed and asleep.

"Tell me all about it again, Martha;" and Martha retold her story.

"It was that dreadful letter of yours, Mr. William, that gave my dear young mistress the worst turn of all."

"Poor Letty!" murmured William Franklin, drawing his thin hand across his moistened eyes. "I might have known it; but in my selfishness I thought only of myself. The only thing I can say is, that I was mad, well-nigh mad, Martha, with persecution and oppression."

"Nobody ever blamed you, William, for writing that terrible

letter. It *was* to be, I suppose; and there needn't be anything more said about it: only you may guess how it worked.

"The night after that letter came, she—poor Letty—came to me in my bedroom, and threw her arms round my neck, crying as if her heart would break. I do believe it would have broke if tears hadn't come. I tried to soothe and comfort the poor dear thing, William; but she wouldn't hear a word I had to say—and, to tell the truth, it was little enough I could say, for I was almost as bad as she was, and could not see any hope anywhere.

"At last, she said, 'Martha, there's only one thing to be done: I'll go out to William; that's all that will be of any use.'

"'Oh, mistress,' I said; 'and what use can that possibly be?'

"She did not know, she said; but if nothing else came of it, she could die with you and for you. I could not move her from this, William. I talked to her, as well as I could, about her child, and what would become of him; but all she could say was that the boy would find friends when she was gone, and that her first and last thought must be with you. More than that, she said that I must help her to get away; and, poor dear, she went down on her knees to me, and begged and prayed me not to forsake her; for if I did, she knew she should go mad. And I really do think the poor dear precious would have gone mad, or died outright, if I hadn't there and then promised to do all she wanted."

"The good Lord bless you, Martha!" burst from Franklin, who, leaning over the table, covered his face with his hands. "Go on."

"All that night and all next day," continued Martha, "I was turning over in my mind what was to be done; and there seemed no way but to go to Mr. Melburn and tell him all about it, and ask his advice. But I did not like that either, for it was

money help we wanted, as well as advice, and that I knew he would not like to part with. Besides, he was a magistrate, and he might have thought it his duty to put a stop to Letty's going altogether, because of little Willy. Well, when I was sorely puzzled about this, and poor mistress hadn't any calmness to form any plans, who should come along but Mr. Haydon, the doctor? He took me aside.

" 'Martha,' said he, 'I have a brother, a very good man, who is going out to New Holland as a chaplain, for which I think him a fool,' he muttered under breath, but I heard him. 'He is married,' he went on, 'and his wife, a delicate thing, has got a baby. Well, he wants a woman to go out with him as nurse, and isn't particular about wages; but he can't suit himself.' "

" 'Stop, sir,' said I; 'isn't New Holland where they send convicts?'

" 'Yes,' he said; 'and the truth is, my brother is going out to the convict colony as a chaplain—a parson, you know.'

" 'And he wants a nursemaid, sir, to go out with his wife and baby? Isn't that what you said, Mr. Haydon?'

" It was what he had said; and he had seen so much of me, he went on, as to wish he could find anybody like me to take the place—wages being not so much an object as a trusty, faithful creature.

" I thought then, William," Martha went on, "that Providence was ordering this for poor Letty; but I have my doubts about it now, for the Bible tells us that the blessed Lord doesn't tempt any one to do evil; and I was tempted at that moment to do evil: and what could come of it but evil? Oh, my poor, poor Letty!"

After this sorrowful outburst, to which Franklin made no rejoinder, save by a troubled groan, Martha went on more composedly, yet with stern self-condemnation.



"I told the good doctor more, William. I said that I meant to leave my place, and that not having any friends I cared about in England, and having to live somehow, and it didn't matter where, I would not mind going abroad with his brother's wife. This was just what Mr. Haydon wanted, though he had not liked to put it in plain words: I could see this; and he told me that he would come again in two days, and if I kept in the same mind, he would then send a letter to his brother, and give me money to take me to London.

"After he was gone, I told my dear young mistress what I had done; and she clung to me with such love and thankfulness that I couldn't have gone back from my word if I had wished to do it; but it was a wrong and a deceit, I confess it now, William; and poor Letty understood, from the first, that she was to take my place and my name.

"I need not tell you about our making secret preparations for going away from here; and how, when it came to the last, last night, your poor dear young wife hung over little Willy, as he lay asleep in his bed, and cried so sadly—oh, so sadly! But her resolution was not altered. It was not that her love for Willy was less than before; but her love for you—her Willy's father—was so strong—stronger than death. It was like what I have read in the Bible, William, where it says that 'many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.' I thought of Letty and her love to you, when I read that."

"God bless her for it! God for ever bless her!" with earnest reverence said the stricken husband.

"And so," said Martha, continuing her narrative, "when the dead of the night was come, we tore ourselves away, with as little encumbrance as we could manage with, and as much money as we had honestly got together, Letty and I. There's no occasion to trouble you with a long story about our journey,

for, somehow or other, we got to London at last, without interruption, and then went down to Deptford, according to Mr. Haydon's directions. There was no difficulty, and not many questions asked; for Mr. Charles (that's Mr. Haydon's brother) was too glad to have somebody who was well recommended; and when the poor dear came back to me—for I had waited out in the streets while she went in—I could see, before she spoke a word, that it was all right—all right, as we thought then in ignorance, as if anything can be right at all that has a deception to start from. Anyhow, your dear, tried, and tempted Letty was hired to go over the water in the name of Martha White.

"There were two or three days given us to make preparations for the long voyage in; and I must say that Mr. Haydon was very liberal in giving your dear Letty money for her outfit, so we went about to different shops to buy clothes and other things; but the parting came at last, and all too soon; and that was the last I ever saw or heard of my dear, dear, dear young mistress." And Martha, losing her fortitude when she came to this part of her narrative, broke out into sorrowful cries and tears.

"Whenabouts was this, Martha?" demanded Franklin, after a few moments' silence.

"In March, the year after your going out."

"The very month in which I made my escape from that hell upon earth!" groaned Franklin.

"Oh, please don't say that, William. You do talk so very strong when ——"

"There is no language too strong, Martha, to describe what we had to bear in that place; but never mind: go on: tell me what became of yourself after—after you parted with her."

"I was almost beside myself with grief," continued Martha,

"but I could not live upon that; so I turned over in my mind what I had best do. Letty had thought that I should come back here, and take care of poor little Willy; and I had not undeceived her, and this took some part of the load off her mind in leaving him. But I did not dare do that, for I knew I should then have to give account of poor Letty, which was what I did not mean to do. So I thought of a sister I had in London, who was married to a drunken fellow of a man. I hadn't seen my sister for years; but I knew where she lived, and I found her out. I went and lived with her for a few weeks, and welcome enough I was while my little money lasted; and before I had come to an end of it, I got into charring work, and kept at that for some years, till I found my way into one of the hospitals as a nurse; and there I was till I made up my mind to risk coming back again; for I terribly wanted to know if any news had ever reached home about my precious one.

"I should not have hid away so long," Martha went on, "if I had not known that Willy was well cared for, and that old mistress was doing well; and this kept up my spirits. It was from Mrs. Judkins I knew this, for I wrote to her, and she wrote to me from time to time. She was always a kind friend, in her way, to your poor Letty, after that time—you know when, William; and I believed I could trust her."

"May God reward her for it!" said Franklin, who still sat with covered face, listening.

"But, oh, William, when I did come back, and found out that not a word had ever been heard of poor Letty from the day she went away, by any one that I could ask, I was ready to sink at first. But it always rested on my mind that she would be helped on in her way; and I kept fancying and fancying that she and you had met, and were living together abroad, and

would come home again when your weary time was up. But now—oh, William! my dear, loving Letty!—what can have become of her? If you had only written, William, we should have known the worst.”

“I couldn’t write, Martha,” said the unhappy husband; “that is, I couldn’t, without running the risk of it being known where I was; and I could not send for Letty to come to me, for my life has been a wandering one, and I have never had a home since—since *then*. But I made up my mind at last, Martha, to risk all, and come home. I was on my way home two years ago, when I was stopped. There’s no use in going over that part of my story. I haven’t the heart to talk; what I have got to do is to act. And I must think—Martha,” he said presently, “wouldn’t Mr. Haydon know something?—the doctor, I mean?”

Martha shook her head sorrowfully. “I have not told you all, William. When I came back, Mr. Haydon had been dead some years, and his wife was gone to another part of the country quite.”

“No matter; there’s all the more for me to do, Martha”—he rose to his feet, and his face, as he spoke, worked convulsively—“this is no place for me; I shall leave—ay, why not to-night? You mustn’t hinder me, Martha: let me go”—for the faithful creature had laid her hand on his arm. “I must find my wife. Let me go!” he repeated, wildly.

“Go? What, William! and fall bad again under a hedge before you are twenty miles from home! And what will you do then? You must not go for this month to come yet,” said Martha, resolutely.

It was true enough. The very exertion of rising, and the agitation of Franklin’s mind, were too much for his only partially returned strength. He sank back again into the chair, and tears of helpless, hopeless misery ran down his cheeks.

Relieved in time by these, he could more calmly and quietly listen to his prudent adviser.

"You are not to go, William, till I give you leave," said Martha; "and there's something for you to do before then. You have not spoken a word to your own mother."

"I have seen her in her sleep, you know; and you tell me that she remembers nothing when she is awake."

"For all that, you must—but it is true enough that she would not know you, and would only be disturbed if she did. But there's your son—your Willy—haven't I told you, again and again, what a fine noble boy he is?"

"Enough, Martha: I'll take care to put myself in his way soon; but you must not bring us together here. Leave it with me, Martha. I'll know him, and he shall know me before long: and then we'll see what stuff he is made of."

\* \* \* \* \*

Nearly a month passed away; then, one dark night, the wanderer departed as he came, and the faithful servant and friend was left to weep alone, to pray alone, and to hope against hope.

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## **PART THE THIRD.**



## CHAPTER I.

### THE FIRST OF MAY—A PRIVATE TÊTE-À-TÊTE—THE MAYERS' SONG.

SOME years closely enough matching with the date of our story, Washington Irving visited an English squire, whose mode of life the genial American has described in his "Bracebridge Hall." Among other chapters in that book, there is one upon May-day Sports, which he witnessed. Washington Irving was far from what is called strait-laced or puritanical, and was an enthusiastic admirer of old English customs; but upon this particular subject he arrived at the following conclusion: "I must say, though I do so under the rose, the general brawl in which this festival had nearly terminated has made me doubt whether the rural customs of 'the good old times' were always so very loving and innocent as we are apt to fancy them; and whether the peasantry in those times were really so Arcadian as they have been fondly represented."

From the sequel of our story the reader will probably arrive at the same conclusion; but we must not begin to point a moral before telling our tale.

May Day at Oakley had been, from time immemorial, devoted to mirth; and it was willed by the squire that the particular May Day of which this chapter is to treat, should be celebrated with uncommon rejoicings; first, because he was himself joyfully inclined, by reason of his recent deliverance from a tedious, painful, and stubborn attack of gout; and next, in honour of the



young sailor, who had returned safe and sound (bating the wound in his now healed leg) from two years' buffeting with the battle and the breeze.

Accordingly, an edict had gone forth from "The Oaks," that none of the squire's own labourers were to work on that day of gladness; while an intimation, which had the force of an edict, was given to his tenant-farmers, that they would be expected to follow so good an example on their farms. In neither case was there any difficulty in exacting obedience, it being understood, as a matter of course, that the wages of the liberated workmen for that day were to be paid out of the squire's own pocket.

Accordingly, the day was ushered in by manifold rejoicings, which would take too long to describe, even were they worth describing. We must, therefore, leave the villagers to the devices of garland-bearers, morris-dancers, jacks-in-the-green, or the bedeckment of the mighty May-pole in preparation for the evening festivities, at which the squire was expected to preside, while we accompany Miles Oakley the younger and Willy Franklin in a solitary walk in a sequestered part of the broad park, and listen to some part of a dialogue.

"No; but Miles, be serious."

"Serious! well, I am serious; but how can I help laughing at your grave face? So business-like, too! Well, now to be serious;" and the heir of Oakley composed his risible features into an appearance of mock solemnity, which the young sailor was far too earnest himself to attribute to real indifference or heartlessness.

"Will you answer a question, then, seriously?"

"Twenty, *mon frère*, only give me time; I can't answer them all in a breath, you know."

"I won't ask you so many. The one thing I want to know

of you is, whether—is about Ellen Murray; tell me, Miles, truly, are you engaged to Ellen?”

“Engaged to Ellen Murray? My dear Willy”—Miles laughed gaily as he spoke—“what a ridiculous question! What has put such a fancy into your head, Willy?” demanded Miles, when his mirth had again ceased.

“I don’t know exactly. Of course, Miles, I never had such a thought before I left England. I seemed to take it for granted that you would look higher for a wife——”

“Oh, there’s no leveller so effectual as love, you know,” interposed Miles, in a tone of affected nonchalance.

“I know that very well, Miles; but yet, somehow, I had no suspicion or thought that you cared or would ever care for Ellen, except as a friend, you know; and so I put it out of my mind—I mean it never entered into my mind—that there was a possibility of our ever being rivals—though rivals, indeed, we never can be; and that makes me press for your answer to my question now.”

“But, my dear fellow—I won’t laugh if I can help it, though you do look so woe-begone—but what has put it into your mind now that we may be rivals? though rivals we never can be. Your own words, Willy.”

“There was something in your last letter that made me fancy it.”

“What nonsense! Didn’t I tell you then that it was all nonsense?”

“Yes, but I could not understand what you meant was all nonsense. And then the people about here have got the notion that it is to be.”

“What people, Willy?”

“Why, old Dick Border for one, and Mother Burrell, at the ‘Oakley Arms,’ and—I don’t know that I can say who else;

but they, at any rate, have hinted pretty broadly that they know where to look for the future lady of 'The Oaks,' and that they have not far to look either."

"And that it is Ellen Murray? Well, Willy, I ought to be much obliged to Mother Burrell, Dick Border, and the rest, who are to be nameless, for taking so much interest in my poor affairs."

"It is very natural, isn't it, Miles? There is no harm, I am sure, in anything they have said; and I can't wonder if it should be so. I must have been a great dunce," continued poor Willy, "not to have foreseen what a natural thing it would be for you to marry Ellen, so good and beautiful and intelligent as she is." And he turned away his head, that Miles might not see his changing countenance.

"You seem to have made up your mind that it is to be, then?" said Miles, not observing or not heeding his friend's emotion.

"You don't say it isn't so, Miles; and I know you would not keep me in suspense if you could help it. Besides, I don't go upon what others have said. Have you not been at the vicarage every day almost since we came home together?"

"Haven't you too, Willy?"

"Because you would have me go, Miles, in your company."

"That does not look as though I were afraid of your rivalry, does it?" demanded the young heir.

"Ah, Miles, you need not be afraid of that," poor Willy rejoined.

"So you told me before, Willy; but how?"

"Why, in the first place, what hope would there be for me? Even if Ellen were foolish enough—and it would be foolish, of course—to prefer a poor fellow, of such a birth as mine——"

"Fiddlesticks about birth; don't I tell you that love is

a leveller? Besides, what is Ellen's birth, I should like to know?"

"Why, her family on the father's side is said to be a distant branch of THE Murrays, the great Scotch Murrays, isn't it?"

"A very distant branch indeed, I should think, Will; go on."

"And with such poor prospects as mine, to say nothing of my wretched origin," continued Willy; "I say, if Ellen were foolish enough to choose me in preference to you, there are her father and mother——"

"A stupid old book-worm, one; and a stupider old match-making fortune-hunter, the other. Does she think I haven't seen through her schemes? Really, Willy, you give me credit for extreme good taste in supposing that I wish to make myself their very obedient servant and son-in-law. No, I do not love Ellen Murray; I only like her, which is a very different thing. Do I mean to make Ellen Murray my wife? No, I don't mean to make Ellen Murray my wife, even if she were to ask me, though she is cast in my teeth every day, by her match-making, fortune-hunting mother aforesaid; but Ellen won't ask me, though next year is leap-year, because she does not like me well enough, and she likes you too well."

"Oh, Miles!"

"And oh, Willy! have I not seen it in her eyes these three weeks? Let me tell you something else, my boy. You have got powerful influence to back you; but perhaps you know this already?"

"If you mean your mother, Miles, I fancy that she would not be displeased——" said our young hero, with reviving hope.

"Displeased! Why, she has set her heart upon it, Willy: and so Mrs. Murray knows; and I'll back the squire's wife against the parson's any day. Don't you know that the

matter has already been canvassed between these high contracting parties ? ”

“ No. Has it ? ” said Willy, with a start of not unnatural surprise.

“ Ay has it; and after a scene which you wouldn’t have cared to witness, perhaps, though it was uncommon fun, by all accounts ; for the parson’s wife didn’t dare let out her secret, which, however, the squire’s wife knew as well as though she had been told ; but after this scene the good lady gave in, swallowed her scruples; and her pride, and her vanity, and her ambition, and all the rest of it, and made believe that the match would be agreeable to her, if, and provided, and all the rest of *that*. And so it will—about as agreeable as vinegar to the teeth. But she can’t help herself, Willy ; and there’s no reason why she should, either. So, all you have to do is to go in and win. And now, if you have no objection, and have no more questions to ask, suppose we make haste back, or we shall have——Hillo, what now ? ”

This exclamation was caused by the sudden appearance of a troop of gaily dressed maidens, upon whom the two young men had pounced on emerging from under the trees into an open part of the park. The leader of the girls had in her hand a large bough of white-thorn, with a few early-budding blossoms nestling among the young and tender green leaves. The girls were evidently proceeding towards the great house ; but on seeing Miles and Willy they stopped short, and after a moment’s consultation, tripped quickly towards them, formed a circle around them, and sang the following ditty, which has been preserved by that zealous antiquarian, Mr. William Hone. The words, no doubt, were originally composed in a solemn spirit, but were sadly out of place when chanted in a strain of levity—a remark which applies also to Christmas carols and other sacred songs.

## OLD MAY SONG.

Remember us poor Mayers all,  
And thus we do begin  
To lead our lives in righteousness,  
Or else we die in sin.

We have been rambling all this night,  
And almost all this day,  
And now, returned back again,  
We have brought you a bunch of May.

A bunch of May we have brought you,  
And at your door it stands,  
It is but a sprout, but 'tis well budded out  
By the work of Nature's hands.

The hedges and trees they are so green,  
As green as any leek,  
Our heavenly Father, He watered them,  
With His heavenly dew so sweet.

The heavenly gates are open wide,  
Our paths are beaten plain,  
And if a man be not too far gone,  
He may return again.

The life of man is but a span,  
It flourishes like a flower,  
We are here to-day, and gone to-morrow,  
And we are dead in an hour.

The moon shines bright, and the stars give a light,  
A little before it is day,  
So bless you all, both great and small,  
And send you a joyful May.

Laughing at their temporary imprisonment within the merry circle, the young men patiently listened to the song till it came to an end. Then, scattering each a handful of small money on the grass (as was probably expected of them), they made their escape, and proceeded to "The Oaks."

## CHAPTER II.

## FESTIVITIES—ANOTHER TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

**B**EFORE the sun had set, Miles Oakley (the squire, we mean), his lady, and his guests (for the vicar, with his wife and daughter, had dined at "The Oaks" that day), proceeded in a body to the scene of festivities on the village green. Young Miles and Willy were there before.

We must give Mr. Murray credit for having for some time resisted the importunities of his friend and patron to show his countenance on the occasion; for, not to say that he would have preferred the seclusion of his own snug study, he was reluctant to give the sanction of his presence and his cloth to the free licence which he knew by experience often attended these holiday-makings. To his remonstrances, however, the squire had good-humouredly replied—

"Nonsense, Murray; you know as well as I do there is no harm in the thing itself, but only in the abuse; and what is more likely to keep us within bounds than your presence? For very shame, or rather out of respect to you and the ladies, who will look to you as their protector, the lads and lasses will behave themselves; but if I have to go without you, I won't answer for consequences."

And as the vicar had no answer ready, and was not a man of decision, he went, offering his arm to Mrs. Oakley, and instructing her on the way respecting the origin of May games, which he plainly deduced from heathen Rome, and her annual sacrifices to the goddess Flora.

The green was already thronged, not so much, however, with the worshippers of Flora as of Bacchus, when the squire and his

company made their appearance, and were received with a mighty shout, to which Mr. Oakley lustily responded.

Probably the presence of their "parson" (for clergymen were commonly called parsons in those days) acted as some restraint upon the fast-flowing mirth and licence of the villagers; but it was sufficiently uproarious, especially when the squire, in the fulness of his heart, and in spite of the frowns of his lady and the deprecatory "hums" of Mr. Murray, insisted on tapping a fresh barrel of beer at his own expense, at the "Oakley Arms," and then on leading off the Queen of the May (the damsel of the hawthorn bough) towards the May-pole. The exercise was too violent to last long, however; and, having vindicated his sovereign right to make his rustic subjects happy in their own way, the squire once more took his station by the ladies of his party.

A bright moonlight evening succeeded to a sunny day; and at length warned by the fast-gathering dew, that an evening chill was not unlikely to encourage a fresh attack from his defeated but not subdued enemy, the gout, the squire submitted to be led away by his Lucy, after a strong admonition to the congregated rustics to be merry and wise—an admonition which obtained partial obedience; the first branch of it being strictly adhered to, and the latter less heeded by many.

We are not going to tell all that passed, as the party returned to the hall from the village green. It is enough to say, that before they were out of hearing of the noisy revelry, the worthy parson's conscience made him uneasy and dissatisfied, and the squire had an uncomfortable feeling that, with the best intentions, he perhaps had "made a fool of himself." The squire's wife and Mrs. Murray had their own conversation; young Miles soon disappeared; and as to Willy, all we have to tell now is, that under the grand old oaks of the park, whose sturdy limbs threw fantastic shadows on the green sward beneath, and while



the nightingales were filling the air with their thrilling melody, he was gladdened by words never to be forgotten, and visions of future rank and honour faded for the time from the young hero's mind, when he felt that for his own sake he was loved by Ellen Murray.

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"The profession is a very honourable one, my dear Isabel"—it was the placable and even-tempered vicar who said this, the next day: "and the young man's prospects of rising in it are far from despicable——"

"Low-born, low-bred," murmured the lady, whose flushed face betrayed the discomposure of her mind.

"Not low-bred, Isabel," returned the husband, gently. "Willy Franklin's breeding and education have been those of a gentleman. And not essentially low-born either, seeing that the Franklins come from an honourable yeomanry stock. To be sure, they cannot write *Armiger* against their names; but——"

"Pish!" said the lady, angrily. "What was his father?"

"My dear Isabel, the less there is said about that unfortunate affair, the better. If our friends at 'The Oaks' have seen fit to bury it in oblivion, and to adopt the son of that unhappy man into their own family, it does not become us to uncover old scars. Besides, you know that I have always had my secret doubts of the real guilt of Franklin."

"Guilty or not, he was a convict, Alfred; you cannot deny that; and his wife——"

"Was an admirable specimen of conjugal fidelity, Isabel. A heroic woman! Martha White has made that plain and evident enough. The poor young thing was wild and mistaken in her line of conduct, to be sure; but she had no adviser, and it was natural——"

"Natural to desert her own child, Alfred?"

"To follow her husband. Well, under all circumstances, yes. But why go back to this? The poor woman is doubtless dead: so is the unhappy man; it is known that he very soon disappeared, and nothing has ever been heard of him. Neither he nor Willy's mother can ever return to trouble us, therefore; and meanwhile the boy has entered on a prosperous course, and is a noble, fine-hearted, affectionate, sensible fellow, and a gentleman to boot. Really, Isabel, I don't—no I really don't think it such a bad match for poor Ellen—considering that we have nothing to leave her, and that, by being Willy Franklin's wife by-and-by, she will be, in a manner, part and parcel of the Oakley family."

"A poor dependant," said Mrs. Murray.

"No, you are wrong, my love. I know very well that the squire has handsomely provided for young Franklin in his will. But I know what you think, Isabel; you fancy that, but for this unfortunate attachment, as you call it, Ellen might have secured Miles——"

"And you taunt me with this, Alfred?" exclaimed the vicar's lady, angrily.

"No, my dear: it was a natural hope for a mother. But it was not to be; and I am not sorry. For, setting aside that this attachment was formed almost in childhood—our own fault that, my love, in letting them be so much together—but setting this aside, there is that about Miles which would make me tremble for the happiness——"

"Well, all you can say does not reconcile me to this folly," said the lady.

"And yet, my dear Isabel, I think—I may be mistaken—but I think that your compact with Mrs. Oakley was, that if——"

"Don't reproach me, Alfred. I know what my compact was; and I shall not draw back from it. But—but I would have prevented it if I could."

“And you could not, Isabel ; so there is nothing more to be said about it. And here comes Willy Franklin himself. Speak kindly, my love.”

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### CHAPTER III.

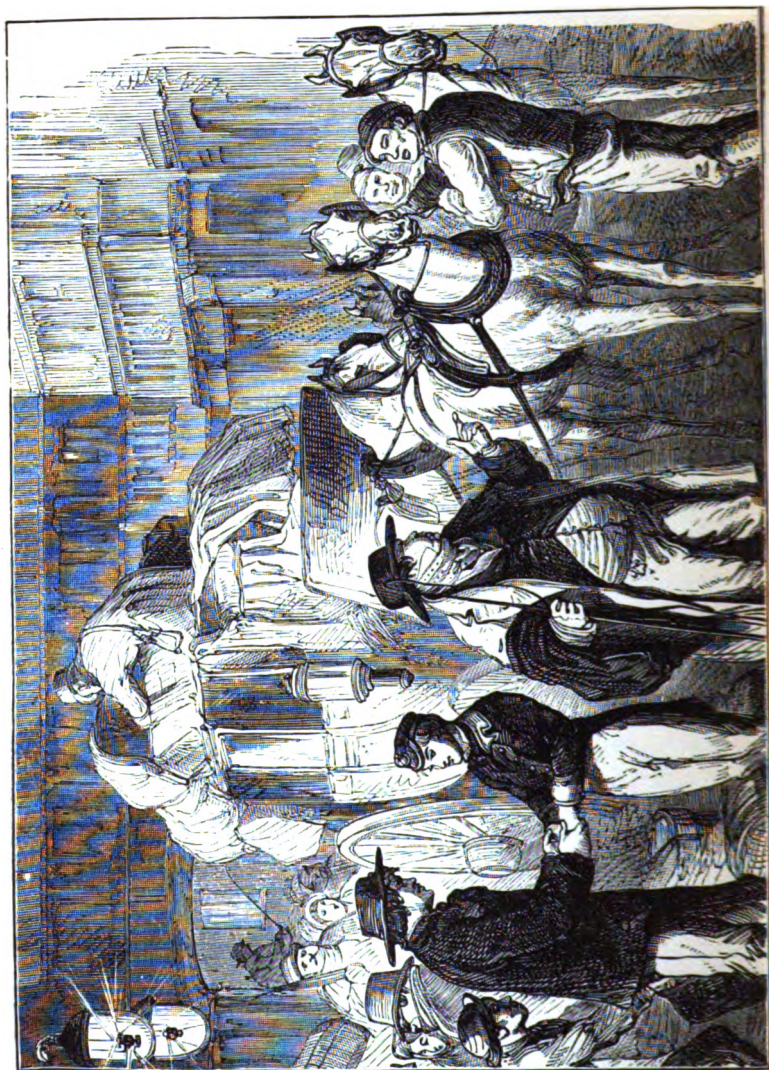
RICHARD ADAMS MAKES HIS APPEARANCE AGAIN.

A FEW days after the events recorded in the last chapter, Miles Oakley returned to Saint Radigunds, and Willy Franklin accompanied him. But whether it were that the attractions he had left behind were too powerful to be withstood, or that the new society into which he was introduced proved uncongenial to his tastes, the young midshipman soon retraced his steps to Oakley. We pass over, however, the remaining weeks of his leave of absence, and without further remark accompany him, one fine June morning, to H., where he parted from his guardian, and mounted the stage-coach which was to convey him to London.

He was in high spirits. The world was opening fairly before him ; he had prospered beyond expectation in the paramount object of his warm affections ; for on certain conditions, which he looked upon as being sure of fulfilment, he was Ellen Murray's accepted future husband. A few more years of service, and he should be free to claim the promised hand—the heart was already in his keeping. All this, and more, mingling with strange fanciful day-dreams of heroic enterprise, filled the young sailor's mind as the coach whirled along over dusty roads, and between tall hedge-rows, fragrant with wild roses, making the day's journey short and pleasant.

It was evening when the coach rattled through the streets of London, and finally drew up at the coach-office from which





WILLY'S ARRIVAL IN LONDON.

Willy had taken his departure two months before. There, to his surprise, stood the sailor Adams, with folded arms, among the porters, waiters, and horse-keepers, who had rushed out from the office and inn-yard at the expected arrival.

"Adams! is it you?" exclaimed Franklin, after swinging himself down from his elevated perch, and offering his hand as he spoke.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the sailor; "I guessed you would be coming up about this time, so I have been keeping a look-out these two or three days past, for the chance of seeing you again—having nothing else to do, you see, Mr. Franklin."

"It was very kind of you, Adams, and I am much obliged to you, I am sure; but, my good fellow, how pale and thin and ill you look!"

"Well, sir, to tell the truth, I have had a smart touch of illness since we parted here, and have had a little trouble as well; but I am getting round again: and it isn't of much consequence. Shall I see to your luggage, Mr. Franklin?"

"No, no; don't exert yourself; you are not strong enough. Here, porter, that trunk up there; and——"

A waiter approached. "Good beds, sir," said he, "and a private room, very snug and comfortable, if you are making a stay in London."

"Very good," said the careless young sailor; "I may as well stop here as anywhere else; and we will have an evening together, Adams."

"Too much honour for such as me, sir," said the sailor, in a subdued tone; but he seemed, nevertheless, willing to fall in with the proposal; and in a few minutes the arrangements were completed and dinner was ordered: for though Willy had dined on the road, he was hungry enough to do justice to another substantial meal. "Besides," thought he, "poor Adams doesn't

look as though he had fared too well of late, and it will be charity to put a good dinner before him under any pretence, poor fellow."

In accordance with this benevolent design, Franklin—as soon as the cloth was laid—clapped the sickly sailor on the back, and said gaily, "Now, old shipmate, we shall quarrel if you don't make some of this stuff vanish pretty speedily."

"You are very good, sir; but"—and he looked down on his rough and coarse habiliments; for Adams was still in his sailor's dress—"but I don't look like fit company for such as you, Mr. Franklin."

"I wish you would just forget what difference there is between us," said the young midshipman kindly; "and please to remember, that if it had not been for you I should not have had a mouth to eat with, or a tongue to thank you with either. Besides, 'being on equal terms' now, you know;—ah! you haven't forgotten our talk on the rocks of Gibraltar, I see."

Adams did not reply, except by a mournful smile, or what seemed to be such to his more mercurial companion; but he offered no further remonstrance, and (a waiter being present) the dinner was eaten almost in silence; for the old sailor seemed to be wrapped in his own meditations, and disinclined to converse.

Presently the cloth was withdrawn, and the waiter too, after receiving orders for the materials for punch, which Willy judged would be more acceptable to his silent comrade than wine. And then the young midshipman broke through the crust of reserve which had gathered over his old shipmate's conversational powers.

"I am afraid," said he, "that my guardian did not act so kindly as he meant to do, in procuring your discharge, Adams."

"What makes you say that, Mr. Franklin?" said the other, looking up.

"You seem so sadly dull," returned Willy sympathisingly.

"You forget that I told you I had been ill, sir," said Adams, in a tone which sounded reproachful.

"Indeed, no: and that you have had trouble as well. And if you have a claim upon any one to help you out of it, you have upon me. I only wish I were better able. If you had only gone down to Oakley with me——"

"Don't speak of it, sir. It would not have hindered the trouble from coming, nor the fever either—for I have had fever, Mr. Franklin. You are not afraid, are you, sir?"

"Not at all," said the young man promptly. "If there were any danger, you would not have been here; and all I have to say is, I rejoice that you have got out of it. I hope," added he "that the trouble you speak of has not arisen from—I may as well speak out—from poverty, Adams. Or rather, I could almost wish that it had; for then——"

"You are very good, sir; no, poverty has had nothing to do with it. I told you, when we parted last, that I had to look up some old friends and acquaintances. Well, Mr. Franklin, I have done it; and you may partly guess what my trouble is—only partly, however."

"You have missed some you had hoped to meet; I can easily suppose it, Adams; but you are too brave a man to be overcome by even such a misfortune. It is the common course of nature; at least, so other comforters would say."

"It is not altogether in the common course, sir, for the younger to go before the older, though in one sense it is common enough too," said Adams vacantly. "But you say right, Mr. Franklin; it isn't the part of a brave man to knock under and let misfortune get the better of him."



"Here's to your health, Adams"—then the young man mixed two glasses as he spoke, and put one of them to his lips—"with best wishes for your future health and happiness."

"Many thanks, sir," said the man; but the glass which Willy had pushed towards him remained untouched.

"I should like to ask you a question, if you wouldn't think it impertinent," said the midshipman.

"I don't think it will be impertinent, sir; and I won't think it so," said Adams.

"Well, then, have you obtained another berth? or—but perhaps you don't mean to go to sea again?"

"Yes, sir, I shall go to sea again, I believe; as to another berth—no, not yet; I am rather looking out for——"

"For a ship?" asked Willy, filling up the blank.

"No, sir, that isn't what I was thinking of: what I was going to say is, that I am looking out for a shipmate; but I am not sure yet that I shall meet with the one I want."

"Not Jem Green, I hope," said the young midshipman, laughing.

"No, sir; though—— But, talking of Jem Green, Mr. Franklin, I told you that some day or other I might have an opportunity of giving you a history of my first meeting with that man. Would you like to hear the story now, sir?"

"I should like nothing better than a good yarn, Adams; and it is a capital idea of yours; but drink before you begin."

"I have taken nothing stronger than water since my illness: but I'll be pleased to drink to you in that, sir," said the moody seaman; and he poured out a large glassful, and drank it off with the feverish eagerness of a very thirsty man. Then he began his narrative—with a preliminary question.

## CHAPTER IV..

RICHARD ADAMS, THE SAILOR; HIS STORY OF A CONVICT SHIP.

“**Y**OU have heard of such a country as New Holland, sir?”  
“Certainly.”

“And of such a place as Port Jackson?”

“You mean the convict settlement?” said young Franklin, with a sudden revulsion of feeling. He looked keenly at the questioner, but he could see nothing in his countenance to build a suspicion upon; and yet a painful suspicion crossed his mind. Was it possible that Adams had long ago met with his father there, and through all the time they were together in “The Glorious” had known the secret of his (the young midshipman’s) parentage, and of the disgrace attaching to his name?

“I told you before, when we talked about Jem Green,” continued Adams, “that there would not be much pleasure in my telling and your hearing his story and my own; and I’ll give you the choice now, Mr. Franklin. If you’ll say the word, I’ll shut up, and you shall never hear from my lips what I have seen and known.”

“No, no; go on, Adams,” said Willy, “unless you had rather not: and”—he added this after a moment’s thought, and with a sore struggle in his soul, but decisively—“and tell me all.”

“To go back again, then, sir, it is the convict colony I mean, of course. And I may as well tell you at once, that years ago I was a convict in that colony. You may despise me for it, sir: it is only natural and proper, I dare say; and perhaps you may think, if you don’t ask, what business have I—such as I am—to be thrusting my company and my confidences on you—such as you are? This would be natural and proper too, for anything I have to say to the contrary, Mr. Franklin.”

"But I don't despise you, Adams," said the young midshipman earnestly, and with a crimsoned countenance. "Oh," he went on, yet more earnestly, "if you could only read my heart, you would find nothing there towards the man who has thrice saved my life but gratitude and respect and—yes, and pity, if pity be needed."

"Well, sir, I do believe you ; and I'll say nothing more about despising. And now, because of those very words spoken so honestly, and which have done my heart more good than you can think—yes, more than you can think, sir, I'll tell you what I did not mean to tell—what I was too proud to care for saying—that, whatever I was sent to that settlement for—which isn't of any consequence to make known to you or to any one else—I was an innocent man. I want you to believe this, Mr. Franklin, having said it. I want you to give me so much of your faith in my simple word, as to believe that simple word ; I was an innocent, and a wronged, and a persecuted man."

It would have been difficult—perhaps impossible—for Willy Franklin, at any future time, to define and describe the contending emotions which struggled within him as the man was making this straightforward and home appeal, and which absolutely and literally choked his utterance. It was but for a moment, however ; then, rising and laying his hand affectionately in that of his companion, and holding it in his trembling grasp, he said—

"I do believe you, Adams ; if my heart could be laid open at this moment, there would be found full faith in your word, as well as respect and gratitude and pity."

"You don't know, you can't know, sir, how much I thank you for saying so," returned the seaman ; "and now, having settled that point, I'll go on with my story, and Jem Green's."

"I need not say, Mr. Franklin, how long ago it is that I was

sent out in a convict ship. You don't know what that is, sir; nobody can know who has not been in one. It would take too long to tell all, or even a hundredth part of what was suffered on the passage out; and I shall not attempt it. But I'll tell you just one part. We were near upon three hundred on board—three hundred convicts, I mean—when we set sail from England. There were men, and women too, of all sorts, among us: highwaymen, horse-stealers, sheep-stealers, shop-lifters, pick-pockets, swindlers; there were men and women of all ages—boys and girls of sixteen, and old people who couldn't be expected to survive the voyage, they were so worn out and feeble; there were men, and women too, from almost all stations in life; men who had been true gentlemen at home, and were transported for political crimes; men who had lived in the position of gentlemen, and had sinned against common honesty; men who had been merchants and shop-keepers and clerks; men who had been soldiers and sailors and ploughmen; there were gipsies, too—you may have observed, Mr. Franklin, that Jem Green was very swarthy, with dark eyes and hair?"

"Yes, I certainly did."

"Well, he was of gipsy blood; he was transported for burglary: and more crimes than that were on his conscience, though not in the indictment. By his own confession, or rather by his own boasting, he had committed more than one murder.

"There were women also, from almost every rank below the aristocracy: females who had never before known hardship, only by name, and with nerves so delicate, that before their misfortune, as they called it, they would have shrunk from the sight and sound of misery; and females who were so debased by long courses of vice as to have lost all regard for decency, and almost the very semblance of their sex. There were women

too, so bowed down with age and infirmity, that they had to be brought on board in men's arms; and others so idiotic, that their fittest place would have been in Bedlam. But I tire you with the description, Mr. Franklin." \*

"You horrify me, Adams; I should not have believed such things to be possible," replied the young midshipman.

"It is horrible to think of, and to speak of, and to hear; fancy then, sir, how horrible the reality must have been, to be shut up with such a company, month after month, until—But I have more to tell you.

"We had not been out more than a week or two when disturbances arose among the male prisoners. The complaint was, that we were being fast killed off with confinement in the poisonous steerage of the ship, and were scarcely ever allowed to go on deck for a breath of pure air; and added to this was the disgusting filth of the wretched place into which we were crammed, like slaves in the hold of a slaver, or cattle in a market-pen. Besides, we were being starved, for the rations served out to us were barely sufficient to sustain life, to say nothing of their wretched quality.

"Along with these disturbances were desperate quarrels among the prisoners—not among all, for the greater part were peaceable enough: but some of the more desperate were like wild beasts, and because they could not vent their passions on the keepers, they turned upon one another. The worst scenes were when our food was dealt out to us; for then the strong, or those who had been strong, fell upon the weaker, and robbed them of what was in itself hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together; and if there was any resistance, or a word of complaint, blows were struck and blood flowed.

\* All this description of convict life aboard a convict ship is too fearfully true, as is what follows.

"There was not the least attempt made at first to put a stop to these disorders. But when, after a time, the fights increased in savageness, and the prisoners, one and all of us, became ferocious—it was the ferocity of despair, Mr. Franklin—a plan for taming us down was put into execution. There was no distinction made, sir, between the old and the young, the strong and the feeble, the desperate and the quiet, the well and the dying: chains were brought, and we were chained together in rows of sixes or tens, as the case might be; and there we were in that hell upon earth (I can't give it a milder name) all the rest of the voyage, fastened together like wild beasts.

"It was not to keep us from hurting one another—don't think that, Mr. Franklin, but to keep from us the power of hurting those who were over us."

"It is very terrible," said the listener.

"I have not told you all yet, Mr. Franklin; but I'll cut the rest of it short. There were deaths almost every day among us; but it was not till the poor wretches died that the chains were taken off them; and then, after a hurried burial service, or none, as it might happen, they were thrown into the sea. But this isn't the worst, sir. You will scarcely believe me, and yet I am telling only the simple truth, when I say that, again and again, up to the very end of the voyage, the poor prisoners used for a time to conceal from the keepers the deaths of their companions, to get their share of provisions. And so the living were chained to the dead till it couldn't any longer be borne.\*

"Well, sir, it ended at last—I mean the voyage did; and by that time more than half of us were dead. Not much over a hundred reached the settlement, and these were in almost the last stages of exhaustion and wretchedness, from scurvy,

\* True, true, only too true.

dysentery, fever, foul food, foul air, and worse than all, sir, from despair.

"And now, Mr. Franklin, I'll tell you how I became acquainted with Jem Green. I have told you that he was one of the convicts; and I may say, too, that he was one of the most violent of all. He was a true Ishmaelite, if, as some say, the gipsies are come of that stock, for his hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him. You see I have read the Bible, sir; and all I will say about that is, that I wish I had read it oftener, and to better purpose, when I was your age. You'll pardon this hint, won't you?"

"I thank you for it, Adams," replied Willy, whose attention was more and more riveted with deep interest on the speaker.

"Because, sir," continued Adams, "there's no telling, even with a gentleman like yourself, how soon a time may come when you will need all the help that religion can give; and if, as you said just now, it doesn't become a brave man to knock under to misfortune, it does not the less become him to strengthen his soul to bear it when it does come. It's the Bible that tells a man how and where to get strength to meet his worst troubles. I don't offend you by saying this, I hope?"

"No, no; on the contrary, I am quite sure you are right."

"Well, then, not to make a sermon out of a story, I'll go on with how I came to know Jem Green. He was one of the gang I was chained to, but not the next one; there was a poor young fellow between us. His name was—but it does not matter about his name; he was a well-educated lad; he had been to college, I believe, and had plenty of learning. But he hadn't learnt everything; and he had got mixed up in some transaction or other which had brought him into the power of the law. What this something was doesn't signify, or if it does, I never knew the rights of it; but it was of that nature that it came to

a death sentence with him. In fact, it was a close shave with him to get off from being hung; but his friends had influence and what with this, and what with the poor boy's youth—for he wasn't above eighteen at the time of his conviction—his punishment was commuted to transportation for life.

"There did not seem much mercy in this. As far as this life was concerned, it would have been happier for the young fellow to be put out of the way at once, than to endure all the miseries of that convict ship. But he did not think so, of course; for all that a man has he will give for his life; and I won't say that the space given to the young man for repentance was not improved. At any rate, he was thankful for the reprieve. But his days were numbered. He had never been used to hardships and privations, and they told upon him fearfully, so that he was reduced almost to skin and bone when the chaining up took place; and it was easy to see that the ship would not be long troubled with him.

"And now comes the strangeness of this part of my story. The gipsy Green, who hadn't till then seemed to care for any man, but had been among the very fiercest of the whole wretched crew of us, took a strange sort of liking to the dying lad. I should tell you that we were chained together leg to leg, leaving our arms at liberty; and day after day, as we sat crouching on the boards—not one of us caring to move, even if there had been space enough for us to move in, which there wasn't—Green's arm was thrown round the poor boy, supporting him, while he spoke kind and tender words in his ear, or tried to raise his spirits by whispering hope. At night, too, when we stretched ourselves down in rows, as we best could, the lad's head was always pillowed on the gipsy's breast; and at meal-times, when our food was dealt out and handed to us by our keepers, the best of Green's rations (though bad was the best)



was picked out by him and pressed upon the poor dying young man.

"It did not save him—it could not save him, Mr. Franklin," continued Adams, who, in recalling and recounting this part of his history, seemed again to live over the horrors of the past; for every muscle in his face worked convulsively, while great drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and tears gathered in his eyes. With a strong effort, however, he controlled himself, and went on more calmly—

"The lad died in Jem Green's arms; and then they came and knocked the fetters off his legs, and dragged the shrunken corpse away. It was a light burden, sir. I thought then—I have often thought since—that if his mother could have seen him—the good, loving mother whom the poor youth raved about in his last moments—that her heart would have been broken outright; but perhaps it was broken before. I have heard it said," continued Adams, with a strange peculiar smile, which contrasted strongly with the earnest simplicity of his former manner, "I have heard it said that women's hearts require a deal of force to break them; do you think it is so, sir?"

"I don't know, indeed," answered Willy, drawing his hand across his eyes; "but they should be made of stout stuff to stand all they have to go through with, by all accounts—some of them at least."

"Yes, to go through with; that's the word," continued Adams. "I have heard, for instance, of some women who have gone through fire and water, and poverty and contempt, after their worthless vagabonds of husbands—not to speak of sons—with the hope of saving them at last, or if not of saving them, of lightening their lot, even by ever so little: or, if not that, why, of dying with them or for them. What should you think

of such a woman, Mr. Franklin, if you had happened to have such a one for your—well, say for your own mother?”

The young midshipman could scarcely stifle the cry which struggled for utterance as this was spoken. During the two months he had been at Oakley, he had heard more from his kind protectress of his own long-lost and forgotten mother than he had ever before heard, or could have heard from any quarter. And though assured, as all were, that that mother had long rested from her weary struggle, a feeling of admiration for her heroism, ill-directed as it was, had taken the place of the indifference with which he had formerly been taught to regard her.

But what did Adams mean by that home question? During the course of the sailor's (or, if you will, the convict's) narrative, an impression had forced itself upon Willy Franklin's mind that the man had in some way become the depository of knowledge, if not of secrets, deeply affecting himself; and he was convinced of it now. Strange to say, however, the truth itself, towards which these revelations were carrying him, never for a moment entered his thoughts. With a strong effort, therefore, as we have said, he suppressed the cry which almost rose to his lips, and, without replying to the pointed question of his companion, merely said, in a subdued tone,

“Go on with your story, Adams, and tell me all.”

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## CHAPTER V.

RICHARD ADAMS : HIS STORY OF CONVICT LIFE, AND OF HIS ESCAPE.

“YOU may think, perhaps,” said Adams, continuing his narrative, “that our sufferings, or the worst of them, at any rate, were over after we landed; but it was not so. I am not one of those, Mr. Franklin, who think that criminals have a right to be treated like pet animals, for whom nothing is too good; but, putting mercy out of the question, justice is due to the very worst of men, and justice never reached us: there was nothing for us in that convict settlement but oppression, cold-blooded cruelty, spite, and revenge. We had been told, or had fancied, that when we reached the place, we should be under the protection of the law. But there was no law that I ever heard of there but the law of might trampling down weakness, and brute force triumphing over what little there might remain of mind and thought and feeling. Shut out from all humanising influences, and beyond the reach of redress, the convicts dragged out a miserable existence, and sank into the worst stages of ruffianism. They were the happiest, or rather, the least wretched, who the soonest lost all that distinguishes a man from a mere animal.\*

“It happened, Mr. Franklin, that, at the time we landed, the settlement was very much straitened for supplies, and all the convicts had been put on short rations—no very cheering intel-

\* The reader will bear in mind that this was spoken of the earliest stages in the history of the convict settlement of New South Wales; and there is abundant evidence, in the authentic accounts of that colony, of misgovernment and despotic power cruelly abused, which fully corroborates the above description.

ligence for us poor starving wretches, who had hoped that, at least in this respect, our condition would be mended. But not only were we almost worse off than before landing—our coming into the colony at that time of scarcity raised such a bitter feeling of spite against us, in those who ought to have been in some sort our protectors, that we fell at once into the lowest depths of degradation, and tasted the full bitterness of being under irresponsible power.

“I have not the heart, Mr. Franklin, to tell you what my own personal sufferings, both in mind and body, were, nor what I have seen, or known others to suffer.

“Hanging was common, for what many would count trivial offences. I saw a poor wretch hung for stealing some of the store biscuits. As to what may be called minor punishments, you may suppose that, among other things, the lash was kept in constant exercise in the camp—for the miserable huts in which we were herded together were called the encampment; and it was no uncommon thing for a dozen men, one after another, to be tied up to the triangle, and receive six or eight hundred lashes a piece for the smallest offences: even a word or a look was often enough.

“This lasted—I mean my knowledge of this fearful tyranny lasted—some weeks; and there was no eye to pity the poor victims, nor any one to step forward to help us.

“One night, while I was fast asleep in the hut (for sleep does come, Mr. Franklin, to the most wretched), I felt a hand laid on me, and woke to find Jem Green by my side. I should tell you, sir, that a kindly sort of feeling had grown up between us, in consequence of the gipsy’s tenderness to the lad of whom I have spoken; and as we worked together in the same gang, we had opportunities of sometimes passing a word or two with each other.

“‘Hush!’ said he; ‘I don’t want to be overheard; speak low;’ and he set me the example.

“‘What is it?’ said I, attending to his caution.

“‘Are you a man?’ he asked, in the same guarded manner.

“‘I once thought I was,’ said I; ‘but there is not much of the man left in me.’

“‘More than you think for, if you’ll only stir it up,’ he answered. And then he whispered a plan he had formed for raising a mutiny in the camp, and among the convicts generally, killing our tyrants, and the soldiers who were employed to keep guard over us, or getting the latter to join us, and setting ourselves at liberty. It does not matter now what arguments the man used for bringing me over to his scheme; all I shall say is, that it did not seem quite a hopeless one. It was true enough that the convicts in the colony at that time outnumbered all the rest, including free settlers, some of whom might be brought, perhaps, to take part with us, or, if not, their farms lay far enough apart to enable us to put down all opposition in detail, supposing we should strike the first blow successfully; and that our condition was so hopeless in itself, that, at the very worst, death seemed rather to be chosen than life.

“Nor does it matter how many days or weeks we brooded over our plans, and tried to get others to join us; for it all came to nothing: the misery was so crushing, that no spirit for resistance was left.

“Then came Green to me again, and urged me to escape with him into the woods. ‘We have gone too far,’ he said, ‘to be safe for an hour. Those whom we have trusted know too much for our safety. The craven dogs will curry favour by betraying us.’

“‘So let them, then,’ I said; ‘it is better to die than to live the life we now live.’

“ ‘ But it is not better to die than to escape from such a life. Come, don’t give up. If you don’t go with me, I go alone.’

“ And so he persuaded me. I knew very well that from time to time men had escaped into the bush; and I knew what had become of the most of them. Some had been tracked and followed and shot down; others had wandered in those dreary wilds till they were starved; and others had fallen into the hands of the natives, and been murdered. I knew, therefore, what I had to expect; but, as I have said, I was reckless of life.

“ We chose a dark night for our escape; and we managed to get out of the camp without being discovered. We pushed directly to the interior, avoiding the grounds of the free colonists who had settled round the port; and by morning we were, as we believed, safe from pursuit; for no one, nor any score of men, would have cared to venture so far after a couple of runaways, while there were more convicts already in the colony than they knew what to do with.

“ We had escaped, then, but only to perish, as others had perished: so at least I thought; for we had neither shelter nor food. But I had not calculated on the skill and contrivance of my companion. In the half-savage gipsy life he had led from childhood, he had learned how to subsist where others must have starved; and it is to Jem Green that I am indebted for my present existence. Life, to be sure, Mr. Franklin, has not been such a rich boon to me from that day to this, as to cause me to set a very high value upon it; but the Bible tells us truly, that ‘ skin for skin; all that a man hath will he give for his life; ’ and you may partly judge why I was anxious to keep the man’s secret, and why I asked you to keep it, when we met—you remember where, sir. It was the smallest return I could make; you see that, Mr. Franklin? But perhaps you think that duty should go before gratitude?”

"Did I think so, when, for your sake, I concealed the fact of Green's being alive?" asked the young midshipman, compelling himself to speak.

"True, sir; and I ought not to put it in that way either. There was in my case, and in yours too, Mr. Franklin—if I may couple our two selves together—a debt due to gratitude to be discharged. And so mercy triumphed over justice and law. To go on with my story, however; I will acknowledge to you now, that life was not without its value to me. The moment I breathed the air of dear freedom in that wild waste, where perhaps no feet but those of savages had ever before trod, I began to feel its value, Mr. Franklin: I had something to live for; at least, I thought so then. I don't think I have ever mentioned it before to you; but I'll tell you now, that here, in England (somewhere down in the country), I had left a wife and child. It may seem strange; but, convict though I was, I did care for them; and at that time I had not given up the hope of seeing them again."

Once more a cry from Willy Franklin laboured for utterance; but strong resolution stifled it. That the struggle was severe, and the pain great, was shown by his quivering lips and bloodless cheeks.

"You do not feel well, sir," said the observant sailor; "the heat of the room——"

"I am well; oh yes, quite well. Your story interests me; pray go on, and don't mind my looks. I shall be all right soon. And, Adams, you know you are to tell me all—all."

"Well, sir, to go on with my story, then; I soon found that Green was at no loss for expedients. Fortunately the weather was dry and the nights warm. In truth, the climate of New South Wales is a very fine one, as will be found out some day. So we got no harm by sleeping in the open air, or under the

shelter of bushes and trees. Strange trees they are there, some of them ; but this is nothing to the purpose.

"Our greatest danger was from starvation, we being so unacquainted with the productions of the country, and not knowing where to look for any kind of food. As to wild beasts, there were none more formidable than dogs, which would have picked our bones clean enough if we had been dead, but were more afraid of us living, than we of them. There were snakes certainly, of a poisonous sort; but they mostly kept out of our way.

"Not always, however; and the first good meal we had was a long snake that we killed, and cooked over a fire made by rubbing two dry sticks together; and our next meal, and many meals in succession, were made of poor bits of herbage or roots, with some great maggoty-like grubs we picked out of the bark of trees.

"As I have already told you, if it had not been for my gipsy companion, I must soon have perished; but he managed to keep life in me as well as in himself, till, after wandering in the bush for more than a week, we fell in with a party of the wild natives.

"And here again, Green's half-savage education stood us both in good stead. There must have been some natural freemasonry, I fancied, by which he managed to conciliate the naked wretches when they first rushed upon us, brandishing their murderous weapons. At any rate, he did conciliate them; and in a short time we were received open-armed into their society. You may smile, Mr. Franklin, but it is true enough, that I was sorely tempted to remain among these barbarians; and if it had not been for thoughts of home, I might have done so. Green urged me to it, and it was only when he found that I was not to be persuaded, that he gave up the idea himself. As it was, we kept company with them several weeks.



"I am making my story too long," continued Adams; "so I will only say how we planned our escape. In all the time of our wanderings with the savages, we had never been far away from the settlement; and one dark night, guided by a native, we made a push for the shore. There, as we had hoped, we found a boat; and by daylight we were out at sea, and out of sight of land, with an old sail, a pair of oars, and food and water enough to last us a week, and a provision of fishing-lines and hooks made from the entrails and bones of animals we had killed.

"A more wild and desperate adventure was, perhaps, never dreamt of; but then we were wild and desperate. Moreover, we were encouraged by an example which had been set some time before by a party of convicts, who went off in an open boat, and succeeded in reaching the island of Timor. This affair had been hushed up, but it made a stir at the time; and we had heard of it, and fancied that what one could do others might."

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## CHAPTER VI.

RICHARD ADAMS TELLS FURTHER OF HIS ESCAPE FROM THE CONVICT SETTLEMENT—HIS AFTER-WANDERINGS—THE DISCOVERY.

"**W**HAT more I have to say will soon be told, Mr. Franklin," continued Adams, who for some time had been the sole speaker; and who, as he told his tale, sat watching with curious interest the concentrated and painful attention yielded by his young auditor. "I might make a long story of our adventures in the boat," he went on; "but I shall only just say, that after tossing about, and steering, as near as we could judge, towards the South Sea islands, till all our provisions were gone, and having no luck in fishing—which was not to





be expected, in the deep seas, death stared us in the face when we looked at each other—a sail hove in sight, and presently we were seen and picked up.

“The vessel was an American whaler, outward bound; and when we were fairly on board, and had been brought to a little, the skipper sent for us into his cabin.

“‘Now, my men,’ said he, ‘I don’t care who you are, or where you come from. I may give a pretty good guess, perhaps; but I won’t ask you, and then no lies need be told. We’ll just say, if you like, that you have dropped from the clouds. But I can tell you one thing, which is, that if you did come in that way, you were sent to work; and one word is as good as a thousand. Here you are, and work you must.’ You may suppose, Mr. Franklin, that we were not sorry to get off on those terms; and this was the beginning of my being a sailor.

“Months afterwards we got safely to Newport (the American Newport), our voyage being ended; and I was free to go where I liked. And here I parted with Green—not very sorry to do it, Mr. Franklin, for he had turned out to be mutinous, idle, and drunken. Yet I had a liking for the poor fellow, because of his adventurous spirit, and the troubles we had passed through together. We parted, however; and I never saw him again till I saw him on board ‘*The Alerte*,’ fighting under the French flag. And now, Mr. Franklin, I have explained to you, from beginning to ending, all the history of my connection with Jem Green, and my knowledge of him. What little more I have to tell is my own separate story. Shall I go on, sir?”

For some time the young midshipman’s elbows had rested on the table, and his head had rested on his hands, the outspread palms of which covered his face. And now, without altering his position, or lifting his head, he replied, in a voice startlingly

altered from the hearty and joyous tones which generally issued from his lips—

“Go on, Adams; you have more to tell me yet; tell me all.”

“I am giving you pain, I see, sir,” said the sailor, who was scarcely less affected than his companion appeared to be, though he made more successful efforts to hide his emotion; “and if you’ll only pass the word, sir, not another sentence shall pass my lips. Let it go, Mr. Franklin; let it be buried for ever. I wouldn’t wonder, sir, if you do hold yourself degraded already by your familiarity with me, and wish we had never met. Only say so, and I’ll never trouble you again.”

“The word that separates us shall never be spoken by me, Adams!” sobbed the young man; and tears gushed out beneath his hands, which still covered his face:—“go on, and—tell me all.”

“Where was I, then?” said Adams, who for a moment seemed bewildered. “I remember: I had landed in America, and was free; yes, that was it. Freedom is a blessed thing, Mr. Franklin; but free, in one sense, I was not. Free! how could I think myself free, when I wasn’t free to return to those I loved best?”

“Did you not write? If you could not return to them, could they not have gone to you?” Almost fiercely Willy said this; but his face was still covered.

“I was an impoverished man,” replied Adams, quietly; “and I was a proud man. I had not been tamed down by the miseries I had undergone; and I—— but it is useless to go back. It is one consolation which I have lately found, that, had I written, it would have been too late. Yet let me say only this for myself: my love never diminished by distance and absence; and I had that faith in—in my poor wife—to believe that she would ever be true to me. So dreaming of a

time to come—a time that never came—when I should, no longer dishonoured and despised by all the world, clasp her once more in my arms, and make up to her all that she had suffered for me, time passed on, and—— and I was silent. Do you reproach me, sir, for this?”

“No, no: why should I reproach you? Go on; your story is not yet told.”

“I had taken a liking to the sea, Mr. Franklin: this was one thing; and another was, that I could not rest long in one place. Though I was no Cain, the brand of Cain seemed on me, and I became a wanderer; while the success for which I strove perpetually eluded my grasp. I saw others making their fortunes, Mr. Franklin—others who had neither the strong motives nor the determination that I had; but I never made mine. After years of toil and danger, I was nothing more than at the beginning. Once I had saved what to me was a large sum—more than a hundred pounds—and had it always with me, till, one voyage, I was shipwrecked, and all I had in the world went down with the vessel.

“At last, Mr. Franklin, I could bear it no longer: every day that kept me from my poor wife and boy seemed a year. I could not wait to write; and, indeed, what would my writing then have done? I determined to risk all. I had no plan beyond that of seeing those from whom I had been parted so many years; all beside that was a blank to me, and I had no thought nor care to know what might be in future. Well, sir, ‘The Dorothy’ was in New York harbour, and a hand was wanted. I applied for it—and you know the rest, Mr. Franklin.”

“Not all—not all: you have more to tell yet, Adams!” cried Willy, as he uncovered his face; he was calm now, though his countenance was pale; and he looked steadily at the sailor.

“Let me fill up the rest of your story,” he said. “You sailed

in 'The Dorothy;' you were pressed before reaching port, and were compelled to serve on board 'The Glorious;' you heard there, or fancied you heard, that you were too late; that your wife was dead, and your son—well, you fancied that your son, wherever he might be, would shrink from you, if he knew you a returned convict."

"I may have had some such——"

"No: but let me finish," said the young man, earnestly and almost impatiently: "you fancied this; but still, you did not love him the less——"

"Love! love!" burst from the convict's lips, in an agony of feeling which broke down the strong constraint he had hitherto laid upon himself: "who besides was there for me to love? I would have died for him; I would die for him now."

"One moment more: you did love him; and there was one into whose society you were thrown, whom you thought to be such a one as your son, under happier circumstances, might have been; from that moment you took an interest in him, watched over him as only a father can watch—saved him, again and again, when in danger. But, to say no more about this, when you parted from him, you found your way to the place which had once been your home. You expected, perhaps, to find your wife's grave, and to hear of the boy; and you have forgotten to say, there was a yet living mother whom you longed to see——No, hear me out"—for the convict essayed to speak—"you returned, and knew then that the wife whom you thought dead had followed you to share in your fate, and had never since been heard of; that the son whom you loved better than life itself was too prosperous and too happy to care——"

"No, no, no, no!"

"Well, let this pass: you seek that son now; you wish to try—to learn from his own lips, when he shall have heard your

story, whether your love is returned, whether he has courage enough to acknowledge you, whether, if need be, he will——”

“Say no more, Mr. Franklin,” said the man, with dignity; “I may have thought all this, sir, as you say. I won’t deny that some such thoughts may have passed through my mind but I have not clearly seen till now the great gulf there is between him who was my son and me, and——No, I give it up, sir.”

“FATHER, FATHER!” The cry broke out at last, and father and son were locked in each other’s arms.

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## CHAPTER VII.

EXTRACTS FROM THREE OLD LETTERS FOUND SOME TIME SINCE IN  
THE ESCRITOIRE OF A DECEASED GENTLEMAN.

**F**IRST EXTRACT.—“ . . . You must decide for yourself, William Franklin. If you have, if you can have, any doubt as to what your course ought to be, I have none at all about mine. If you choose to follow the fortunes of the man who calls himself your father—a pretty sort of father!—and go over the world in search of a mother who has been long since dead, or she would have turned up before this, you can do so; I don’t mean to hinder it. But, in that case, I wipe my hands of all future concern about you. I should never have thought, though, of having to deal with such an ungrateful—but I won’t use strong language.

“You say your father is innocent: innocent! But I am not going to argue with you.

“You write about your love and gratitude: show your love and gratitude, Willy, by returning to your duty. Haven’t I



been a father to you all your life? My poor boy! you don't know what you are doing when you throw away—but I shan't persuade you. Don't think I am in a passion with you, Willy; but I tell you, sir, that if you don't give up this disgraceful connection at once, I have done with you for ever. There; I have written it now; and I mean it.

"But I don't doubt you'll think better of it. I'll give you two days to decide in; and if I don't hear from you then, I shall know what to think.

"There will be some money coming to you when you are of age, from the sale of 'The Lees,' sixteen years ago: this is in the lawyer Peake's hands, and he'll reckon with you for it.

"But I can't believe it of you, Willy. Do write and let me know that I have not lost one who has been almost as dear to me as my own son.

"So no more at present, sir, from your obedient servant,  
"MILES OAKLEY."

*(Second extract: written three days later in a lady's hand.)*

" . . . . . You will acknowledge the importance, sir, of our coming to a final understanding. I need not tell you, I think, that I never approved of your courting my daughter, but was over-persuaded to permit your addresses. Of course, your good sense will tell you that now it is all over. I could not, under any circumstances, have permitted it to go on, if I had not been assured that your parents were dead, and all their past disgrace buried in oblivion; and now, especially since you have caused such just offence to your best friend and patron, and been discarded by him for ever, and so have sunk yourself down to the level from which his goodness raised you, I consider myself as doubly bound to save my poor child from the misery of a *mésalliance*. You are to consider, therefore, sir, that all

which has passed on that subject is to be forgotten, and that both Mr. Murray's and my consent to the foolish engagement is *entirely retracted*.

"ISABEL MURRAY."

*(Third extract: written two days still later, and in a very hurried hand; the letter being much blotted in places, as though tears had dropped on the writing before it was quite dry.)*

". . . . Do not think too hardly of my dear husband, Willy. He loves you dearly, I know, though he is so angry with you; and he is suffering so much from the gout, which came on the very day your first letter came to 'The Oaks,' and has sent him almost out of his mind. I have tried to soften him, Willy; and I took your part against him, indeed I did, and told him—[a blot here, rendering several words illegible] but you know how hard it is to turn him. And yet, so kind and good as he is! . . . . .

"Have patience, Willy, and all will come right at last. It is hard to bear now; but you feel you are doing right, and I can't think you are doing wrong; and so I think you will get through it all, and you will be our Willy again, as much as you were before. And, dear Willy, when you are wandering far away, you may believe that there is one friend at 'The Oaks' who has never altered towards you, and who will do all she can for you still.

"I put in a bank-note, Willy. It is only fifty pounds. I wish it were more, for your sake. But it may be of use to you.

"And I'll tell you a secret, Willy. It was only yesterday that my dear husband took it out of his pocket-book and gave it to me; and when I asked him what I was to do with it, he told me, in his way, you know, not to bother him with questions—that I might buy sugar-plums with the money if I liked.

But, Willy, he knew very well what I should do with it. So I don't think he is so angry with you as he seems.

"You must write, Willy, and let me know how you succeed in your search. Not that I expect you will succeed, for your mother you will never see again, I am almost sure; for why should she have kept silent all these years if she were in life? It will be better for you not to send to me; but if you write to Martha White, she will let me see your letters. . .

"I can't write any more, dear Willy, only to tell you again to keep up heart, and to believe that I am your faithful friend

"LUCY OAKLEY."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### LETTY.

**T**wo women of middle age were seated on a rough bench, under the verandah of a long, low building, near the bank of a winding river. The stream was low, for it was a season of summer drought; but there was water enough to administer to the wants of a small drove of cows, and a more considerable flock of sheep, which were crowding the river bed, as well as to supply sufficient nutrition to the herbage around, and to the swamp oaks with which the banks were fringed.

Turning from the river, the eyes of the spectator would have been greeted with signs of husbandry; for patches of land were under cultivation; fields of corn inclosed by rude but strong fences were ripening for the harvest, and waving their yellow crops in the evening breeze, while larger tracts of pasture-land were brown and dry from the effects of the summer heat.

No other habitation than that we have mentioned was visible. On the contrary, the whole landscape, as far as the eye could reach

was wild, solitary, and gloomy. In truth, you would have had to travel far and painfully in any direction, before meeting signs of life, save those of the natural denizens of an unbroken and undisturbed wilderness. Without attempting any further description, it is enough to say that the lonely dwelling was the farm of one of the earlier free settlers in Australia (not then known by that name, but as New Holland), and that the two women were, one the wife of the emigrant, and the other, her faithful companion, her children's nurse, and the humble friend of the self-expatriated family.

The history of Mrs. Wilson—the mistress—is simple enough, and soon told. Many years before the date of this part of our story, she landed at Port Jackson, the wife of a gentleman who, under the impulse of benevolent and Christian motives, had devoted himself to a life of toil and self-denial, not counting his own life dear to him, in his ardent desire to rescue and comfort the lost and perishing. It was a noble enthusiasm; and Mr. Haydon (that was the clergyman's name) had his reward—but not in this life. His course, indeed, was beset with difficulties, which at that time seemed insurmountable; and he encountered not merely opposition but persecution, which speedily broke his heart. After a few months of arduous labour among the wretched and degraded convicts, without any apparent result, and then a few months of physical weakness and wasting decline, the devoted man died, leaving his poor and mourning widow and fatherless child to the contempt and neglect of the government officials of the colony, and to the overruling and merciful providence of the widows' God.

And He who sent bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, by the ravens whom He had commissioned to feed His desolate prophet, at the brook Cherith, took care of the lone widow in that convict colony. She never

wanted, neither did her child ; and she was enabled also to throw her protecting arms around the servant who had accompanied her from England, and who at that time needed all the care she could give, as will presently be seen.

There was at that time in the infant, yet precociously vicious colony, a young man of good birth, education, and principles, who had gone out as a Government official, but who, becoming speedily disgusted with the misrule and tyranny that prevailed, had thrown up his appointment, and obtained a grant of land a few miles from the coast settlement. There he had lived a solitary bachelor, with three or four convict servants, whom he employed in the cultivation of his land. A determined, at any rate a professed, foe to matrimony, George Wilson flattered himself that he was out of the way of temptation to commit that folly ; and, to shield himself more securely against it, he would not permit the services of a female convict in his household. Happening, however, to be at Port Jackson on some occasion, more than a year after the death of Mr. Haydon, he encountered the young widow, and immediately his wise resolves melted like ice under the influence of a tropical sun. There is no need to make a long story of his courtship, and the many nay-says which preceded the final consent of the wooed one : it is enough to tell that they were married, and proceeded at once, with Mrs. Wilson's child, to their home in the bush. There was one condition with which this nuptial contract was clogged, on the lady's part, namely, that poor crazy Martha, or she who was known as such, should accompany her to her new home, and should be insured, as far as human foresight could avail, against future want. The condition was not a heavy one in the husband's estimation ; consequently the poor unfortunate became a member of George Wilson's now augmented and enlivened household.

The life of a settler in a new colony is necessarily laborious and self-denying: it is often perilous also; and the Wilsons were not exempt from these drawbacks to domestic felicity and substantial prosperity. In the earlier years of their wedded life, especially, they endured many severe privations, suffered grievous losses, and were exposed to considerable personal dangers, the remembrance of which sometimes made them thoughtful, while the recollection of the deliverances they had experienced, now that those difficulties had been surmounted, made them thankful. As these good people, however, are only subordinate personages in our story, we may pass on to another of our *dramatis personæ*, in whom our readers take more interest, namely, the Martha just mentioned, who will be readily identified with the Letty Franklin of the earlier portions of this narrative.

Under the assumed name of Martha White, then, Letty Franklin entered the service of the Haydons on the eve of their departure from England. Bewildered by the severity of her misfortunes, and blinded to any evil consequences which might arise from her deception, or justifying that deception by the rectitude of her motive, she thought only of her husband, and how she might share with him the load of ignominy and sorrow which was too heavy for him to bear alone. Could she but reach him in time to save him from the desperate attempts at which he had hinted—to be at his side as a comforter—to wear out with him the long years of banishment to which he had been consigned—her object would be attained: and, in her defective mode of reasoning, the end sanctified the means. If it were wrong to leave her home and her child, to borrow a name not her own, and assume a character which did not belong to her, why, she would do evil that good might come. She forgot, or had not known, that wrong can never lead to right.

Having thus interpreted, as far as we can, the mistaken motives by which she was actuated, we may briefly say that the fictitious Martha White faithfully performed the duties she had undertaken. Sustained by the hope of meeting her husband at last, she bore with astonishing fortitude the inconveniences of a long and stormy voyage, and devoted herself to the comfort of her mistress and the child she had engaged to nurse. This was the more marked and acknowledged, since Mrs. Haydon fell dangerously ill on the voyage; and the grateful husband attributed her recovery to the constant and self-denying attentions of poor Martha White. It is scarcely necessary to say, that no suspicion attached to her through the voyage; and if at times she gave way to sudden and uncontrollable paroxysms of grief (which, however, were not frequent, and did not last long), these were reasonably enough traced to the natural overflowings of a young widow's fond regret, and were respected accordingly.

On the conclusion of the voyage, however, and especially on the day of landing, a strange and unaccountable alteration took place in poor Martha (or Letty). Her excitement was so great, that her perplexed master and terrified mistress very naturally believed that her wits had forsaken her. They removed her carefully, therefore, to the temporary lodgings provided for themselves, and recommended her to quietness and repose, without thinking it necessary, and perhaps being unable, to keep a strict watch over her. On the next day she was missing for several hours; and when her alarmed mistress made inquiries respecting her, no further intelligence could be gained than that she had been seen to leave the hut very early on the morning of that day.

It need scarcely be said that the missing woman was diligently sought; and it was presently discovered that she had

been roaming around the convict encampment, making passionate inquiries for one whose name the Haydons had never heard, until she was informed that he for whom she asked had long since disappeared, and was, beyond all question, dead. Then, uttering a piercing shriek of agony, the poor fugitive had fled from her informant, and had been no more seen. But later in the day the fugitive was found, exhausted and apparently dying, in the tangled scrub of the surrounding wilderness, and was carried back to the settlement.

Brain fever ensued, and a long illness followed, during which she was watched over with anxious solicitude by her grateful mistress. Eventually, but not till after the lapse of many weeks, bodily health and strength returned; but the poor creature's intellect seemed to be hopelessly obscured, and almost all memory of the past obliterated.

It may be supposed that, under these distressing circumstances the crazed woman would have become almost intolerably burdensome to her protectors. It was not so, however. Her derangement was of a gentle sort; and an instinctive gratitude appeared to impel her to self-denying labour for her benefactors, who, on their part, deemed it prudent to avoid all reference to the mysterious circumstances under which her intellect had become unsettled. Soon, indeed, as we have intimated, the Haydons had troubles enough of their own to contend with; and so the disposition to make curious inquiries into the history of crazy Martha—if any disposition did ever exist—eventually died away.

Not to prolong this explanation, years had passed away, and poor Martha still retained her position in the family of her mistress. She had witnessed the death of Mr. Haydon; had taken a part in the sober second nuptials of the widow; had shared in the trials of a life in the bush; had nursed and helped



to rear the children born there—herself, all the while, living, moving, and acting as in some tranquil dream.

A few weeks previous to the date of this part of our history, however, there were evident symptoms of awakening. Memory was struggling to regain its power. Snatches of the past flitted before the mind of the bewildered woman, as in a dissolving view—then disappeared and left a blank as before—then reappeared with greater vividness, until they were fixed on the mind, though only in detached portions, and not as an entire and consistent whole. This was the first process of recovery; but it was followed by others. Gradually the separate pictures spread over the canvas combined, until all was covered, and gained every day in distinctness.

The mind of Letty Franklin—for we shall now give back her true name to the fictitious Martha—would have been a curious psychological study to an interested and philosophical observer. She lived, or seemed to live, two separate existences; that of the present, a mere material existence, which was patent enough to her senses; and that of the past, in which she was conscious of toil and suffering as having been passed through and endured by a former self, with which she had now no personal and intimate connection.

This, however, was an intermediate state, like that lethargic semi-consciousness which is sometimes for a short space experienced on first awakening from a night's slumber that has been disturbed by dreams. It did not last long; and the perfect recollection which succeeded brought with it the old sorrow, not softened by time, but crushing down the poor victim as a burden too heavy to be borne. Once more bodily strength gave way, and the tried sufferer was again laid on a bed of sickness.

Happily, Letty was in good hands; and when, in the agony of her restored mind, she turned to her mistress as to an assured

comforter, and poured into her astonished ears the history of her life and its sorrows, she met with a warmth and energy of sympathy which, though it could not remove the burden, materially lightened it. Better still, the consolations and hopes of religion were pressed home upon her soul; darkness and ignorance faded away before the life-giving beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and the wild lament of the frustrated and despairing spirit was changed into the softened grief "of one whom Heaven is teaching how to mourn."

Again Letty partially recovered health and strength, but not entirely; and while returning to her duties in the household of her benefactors, the hectic flush on her cheek, the quickened pulse, the hacking cough, the aching side, and the brightened eye, too surely betokened that her days were numbered.

It may be taken for granted that the light so lately thrown upon the secret history of their dependant, led the Wilsons to make inquiries respecting the convict husband; and it is almost needless to say that these inquiries ended in disappointment. Other steps were also taken by them. With the memory of the past had returned to Letty's mind an overpowering anxiety respecting the child she had so long ago abandoned, and to whom, if he were living, she must have been reckoned among the dead. In proportion as she became convinced of the short and brittle tenure on which she now held her own life, did this anxious desire increase—taking the form, and almost the words of the aged patriarch—"Let me go and see him before I die."

Sympathising in this resurrection of maternal love, and convinced that if Letty were to wait the lengthened period which must elapse before inquiries respecting her "little Willy"—as she fondly called the boy—could be made and answered, the hope of a meeting would inevitably be lost, the Wilsons made such preparations as they were able for the poor woman's return

to England. These preparations included the procurement of funds for the passage, and necessaries for the long voyage; and this was a matter of difficulty; for though the emigrant farmer was rich enough in lands and stock, he had but little hard money, neither was it easily procurable in the colony. It was little imagined at that time that, within a hundred miles of the convict settlement, pure gold in not easily exhaustible quantities was actually cropping out of the virgin soil, or buried at the depth of only a few feet beneath its surface.

Neither was it an every-day occurrence for ships to be leaving that distant and out-of-the-world port. Once or twice a year, perhaps, came a convict ship, or a small fleet of convict ships, after a voyage which had lasted some eight, nine, or ten months, as the case might be, to discharge its wretched cargo of rank and festering crime and guilt. These ships, of course, returned; but beyond these, departures and arrivals were few and far between. It was necessary, therefore, for persons wishing to leave the colony, to bide their time, and wait with what patience they could muster, weeks, and sometimes months, for an opportunity of escape. Thus Letty's departure had been delayed.

On the day to which we have referred at the commencement of this chapter, Mr. Wilson, with his eldest son, had been two days absent from home on a visit to the port, the principal object of his visit having been to ascertain whether any ship was then in the harbour, and if so, when it was likely to leave. The return of the travellers was now expected; and the eyes of the two women were instinctively directed to an opening in the bush, in the direction of the settlement, while they occasionally beguiled the minutes of watchfulness by earnest converse.

The sun sank lower and lower; the shadows of evening lengthened and darkened; and no signs of life had yet appeared in the distance. With a sigh of deferred hope, and a mental





prayer that the travellers might be kept under the shadow of the Almighty, as under a sheltering wing, the disappointed matron was rising to re-enter her habitation, when an eager cry from Letty arrested her steps; and turning once more to the spot towards which she had been so long and so vainly gazing, she saw dimly, through the evening mist, four horsemen advancing at a rapid pace into the more open plain. For a minute or two a thick clump of trees and scrub intercepted her vision; then the travellers re-appeared, and were more distinctly visible. Once more they were lost to sight, and once more they emerged, yet more distinctly.

"My husband and boy!" said Mrs. Wilson, with a sigh of strong relief, and with a tone and look of grateful acknowledgment adding, "Thank God, they have returned safely! But who are the strangers?"

The question was put to ears which were even then beyond the reach of her voice; for, on looking round for her companion, she saw, to her extreme amazement, that Letty had vanished from her side, and was hastening down the river bank, reaching which she sprang across the diminutive stream, pursued her course up the opposite bank, and then directed her hurrying steps towards the horsemen.

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## CHAPTER IX.

SYDNEY, A LONG WHILE AGO—ITS FIRST PRINTING-OFFICE—AN  
ADVERTISEMENT.

SEVERAL days previous to the evening of which we have spoken, a large vessel, but half a wreck, struggled into Sydney Cove, and cast anchor opposite the port.

Necessarily she was a convict ship; and in due time she

disgorged her freight of misery and recklessness, and was glad to get rid of it; and the freight was similarly glad to get rid of *her*. For though there had been many wretched voyages made before this time, there had scarcely, probably, been a more wretched one made than by this particular ship, at this particular time. She had encountered one terrific storm after another—a succession of storms from her first sailing, ten months before—which had disabled and dismasted her. She had been beaten out of her course; she had lost one-fourth of her crew, and one-half of her captive passengers, by scurvy and hard fare, and fatigue and jail-fever; she had witnessed mutiny and bloodshed, and violent deaths. But she had reached port at last, to the wonder and astonishment of all who knew what a rotten, battered, worn-out, leaky old hulk she was before ever she left the shores to which she would never return. She had reached her destination notwithstanding; and this was something to be thankful for.

Our business, however, is not with the half-wrecked convict ship, which was condemned to be broken up for firewood; nor with the convicts themselves, who were marched off to the Government barracks, some to die of diseases contracted on the voyage, and others to commence their years of servitude as soon as they recovered strength.

Yet we may say, in passing, that many changes—and all of them for the better—had taken place in the convict colony since the first rough experiments of the system had been tried. Some degree of order had been wrought out of chaos and confusion; incompetent governors and lawless tyrants had been removed and replaced by others, who had at least some touches of human feeling, and some appreciation of the duties and difficulties they had undertaken to fulfil and overcome. So encouraging had these new experiments been, that by slow and cautious degrees

the little influx of free emigration which had been commenced years ago, by one or two exceedingly bold or altogether desperate spirits, had gradually increased to a small but pretty constant stream, destined, as our readers know, to swell, in less than a half-century, to a mighty rushing torrent, while yet the broad land craving for a people would still be stretching out its hands, east, north and west, and crying (like the horse-leech's daughters, but with kinder intent), "Give, give." Meanwhile, some of the first convicts who had survived the fiery ordeal through which they had been made to pass, and had regained their freedom, had betaken themselves to the easiest course which remained open to them in the colony—that of honest industry.

Had these very men been turned loose upon society at home they would probably—almost certainly—have returned to crime ; but where there are none to be robbed, robbers cannot well thrive ; and where the alternative is between prosperous and enjoyable labour, and voluntary starvation, the laziest of mortals will generally work. So the scum and refuse and dregs of the people in the old country, for whom hanging was considered by some to be too good, settled down in the new, reclaiming the wilderness, cultivating the soil, raising and rearing flocks and herds ; in a word, prospering exceedingly, till their foul origin was almost forgotten, or, at any rate, practically ignored, and they had learned to talk fluently of the rights of property, and the duty of those who held it to punish any who lawlessly infringed upon those rights.

By this time, too, the little settlement of squalid huts, with its convict camp and Government stores, had undergone a striking alteration. Apart from the convict establishments, a town of free and industrious inhabitants had begun to raise its head. Irregular streets of brick and wood buildings witnessed daily some sort of profitable trading ; a printing-press had



ventured, beyond the intention and expectation of its first projectors, to issue its weekly sheet (under authority, too), which was dignified by the name of *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, and it prospered—albeit the printer was an enlarged convict; and a church, substantially built of brick, well filled with Sunday worshippers, had superseded the barn-like edifice which had been out-grown by the rising settlement, but which, a dozen years before, had been an improvement upon the open-air services (when Divine service was held) of the first colonists.

Modern inhabitants of Sydney may indeed look with contempt and abhorrence upon the unfashionable and disreputable, and probably morally vile quarter of their city known as “The Rocks;” but they will not deny that there lay the germ of its present superior grandeur and prosperity.

To return to our story:—

Two days succeeding that on which he left his home in the bush, Mr. George Wilson, with his son, entered the office to which reference has just been made—that of *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*—to make some inquiries respecting the chief object of his visit to the city. At that moment the printer was speaking to two sailors, or men who appeared by their dress to be such, who had only by a minute preceded the farmer. As soon as the printer saw and recognised Mr. Wilson, however, he rather unceremoniously bade his first customers wait a bit, while he transacted business with his well-known and more reputable-looking client—not that he added this latter part of the sentence aloud; but he meant it internally.

“No, no, friend Howe,” said Mr. Wilson; “first come, first served, is a good rule all over the world. I can wait; and don’t hurry for me.”

Thus admonished, Mr. Howe turned again to his first customers, whose business seemed to consist in handing over an advertisement for the next week's *Gazette*; and while the printer was deliberately scanning the manuscript, Mr. Wilson took mental notes of the two men.

There was not much to note, perhaps; but what there was we may as well put down.

The men, then, who, as we have observed, were clad like common seamen, were of considerably different ages. The elder of the two was at least fifty years old, and looked older; the younger would not have been much over one or two and twenty. They were both good, honest-looking fellows; but both were pale and emaciated, and evidently weather-beaten. The latter appearance was doubtless of long standing; the former was probably the result of recent hardships and privations. The few words which passed between them and the printer were spoken in a low tone; but what little reached the ears of the undesigned listener betrayed, in his opinion, a greater degree of polish and education than might have been expected from their appearance.

Mr. Wilson had thus far pursued his observations, when an exclamation from the printer, directed to himself, effectually diverted his attention.

"Very singular this, Mr. Wilson," said Howe, passing over to that gentleman the strip of paper he had been reading, and which was written in a good bold hand. It read thus:—

"Whereas, in or about the year —, a young person named Martha White, being then in the service of the Reverend Charles Haydon, landed, or is supposed to have landed, in this colony, and has not since been heard of by her friends in England; and whereas it has been ascertained that the said Reverend Charles Haydon has been long deceased——"

Mr. Wilson read as far as this, and then looked off the paper, first at the men; then at the printer.

"Singular, isn't it, sir?" the printer repeated.

"May I ask what is singular?" interposed the younger of the two men, turning abruptly, and with a flushed and anxious countenance, to the speaker.

"Well," replied Mr. Howe, "it is a foolish thing of me to interfere just now, of course, because I am safe to lose by it. But for all that, I'll tell you that you may save yourselves"—he addressed the two sailors jointly—"the trouble and expense of advertising, and the reward you offer as well."

"What do you mean?" demanded the two men in a breath.

Here Mr. Wilson interposed: "Howe is right," he said; "come with me, and I will give you the information you want."

The two sailors looked earnestly at the farmer; truth and good faith had set their mark on his countenance, and they were encouraged.

"We'll go with you to the world's end if you can do that, sir," said the elder of the two, in an agitated voice.

"That's well; follow, then," said he, as he took his son's arm and left the office, adding, however, before he crossed the threshold, "My business will keep till to-morrow, Mr. Howe."

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## CHAPTER X.

### A TESTIMONIAL—A DISCOVERY—AND A MEETING.

EAGER as were the two sailors to receive Mr. Wilson's promised explanation or intelligence, and desirous as was that gentleman of satisfying them and himself, they had each to exercise some degree of patience. On reaching the

hotel at which the farmer and his son had put up—for Sydney could, even at this early period of its existence, boast of more than one hotel—on reaching this hotel, the sailors were instantly seized upon by three or four earnest-looking persons, whose grasp, however, though forcible, was by no means unfriendly, as Wilson was glad to see.

"Here are the Adams's, both of them," said one.

"We have just been down to the ship for you, and couldn't find you both, or either," said another.

"But we have got you now, my hearties," added a third; "and there's no time to be lost: so come along."

"What is the meaning——" the young sailor began to ask, but was stopped with——

"I should think you can give a guess at it, or ought to, but never mind; you'll see; you'll see." And so, half dragged along by main but kindly meant force, the seamen were separated for a minute or two from the Wilsons.

"We may as well see, too, George," said the father, "for I must not lose sight of these men, if I can help it." And, as no one said them nay, they followed the excited group into one of the public rooms of the hotel.

The room was pretty well filled; about a dozen men, or from that to a score, were standing together in groups, and talking. They were young, or at most middle-aged men, in the garb of landmen, in appearance respectable, but not higher than this in the scale of society; so, at any rate, Mr. Wilson concluded. They were all strangers to him, which indeed was no wonder; and, but for a very visible, though indescribable touch of care, or anxiety or fatigue, or recent suffering (whichever it might be) on their countenances, and of consequent gravity in their manner, they might have been supposed, by an active imagination, to have instantaneously transported themselves from some

farmer's market-room or rural parish vestry-meeting in the old country.

These thoughts rapidly passed through Mr. Wilson's mind as he glanced around him; and he was following up his conjectures, when those conjectures were interrupted by a voice at the farther end of the room, saying, "Please to come forward, gentlemen, and bring your prisoners with you."

"Prisoners!" exclaimed the elder seaman, angrily, and shaking off the hold of his friendly captors. He did not attempt to escape, however; and Mr. Wilson heard one of them say, laughingly, "Don't mind, 'tis only Mr. Thompson's joke."

Accordingly, the whole party clustered round the owner of the voice, whom Mr. Wilson perceived to be seated at a small round table, on which was displayed a little heap of guineas, some sixty or seventy in number, it might be. The speaker was probably the oldest man in the room, with the exception of the sailor who had last spoken; he had a written paper in his hand, and he rose as the company advanced.

"Now, silence, gentlemen," said he, "while I read;" and then, from the paper in his hand, which, as he held it up, looked extremely like a petition, he read thus:—

"This is to certify that we, the undersigned passengers recently on board the — from England, and now safely landed at Sydney, gratefully acknowledge that, under a merciful and overruling Providence, our lives and our property have been preserved during the late most disastrous voyage of the said ship, mainly by the skill, exertions, and bravery of Richard Adams and William Adams, father and son, who, though serving before the mast, exercised so much control over their fellow-seamen, and so much foresight and judgment under the most perilous and adverse circumstances, as to call for our warmest

admiration, and the most substantial thanks we have in our power to give.

"We further testify, that the aforesaid Richard Adams and William Adams did, at the risk of their own lives (when the captain and officers of the — were overcome either by drunkenness or cowardice) succeed, with such assistance as we could give, in quelling a fearful and desperate mutiny which broke out among the convicts during the voyage, and which threatened us and the said officers, and the crew in general, with cold-blooded murder.

"In feeble acknowledgment of these inestimable services, we do hereby affix our signatures, and furthermore do most cheerfully subscribe the undermentioned sums individually, which we beg the said Richard and William Adams to accept, not as payment for those services, but in slight and insufficient remembrance of the signal benefits conferred by them and received by us."

The reading of this document was followed by much applause, and it was some time before either of the sailors could utter a word in reply, to the loud and often repeated congratulations and thanks, which, with much shaking of hands, were offered to them by their friends. At last, however, in a few manly sentences, the elder of them expressed his own and his son's sense of the honour conferred upon them both, and his satisfaction that they had been able to do their duty—only their duty—under the circumstances to which the paper referred. They had done this without expectation or thought of fee or reward, he said; and he knew that he spoke his son's mind as well as his own, in saying, that he earnestly hoped his good friends would not be offended by his assurance that their thanks and appreciation of such services as had been rendered would be more acceptable, more valuable, unaccompanied by the offering,

which, however liberally conceived and delicately conveyed, might attach a mercenary character to the remembrance of those services.

The man was so firm in this, and the son so strongly seconded this expression of feeling, that those who, in the first freshness of their gratitude, had really contributed out of their own scanty resources more than they were able to spare, were compelled reluctantly to withdraw their gift.

"And now, my friends," said Mr. Wilson, who had been an admiring and approving witness of this scene, "if you can spare a few minutes——" he said this to the father and son, who needed no second bidding, but followed him into another room.

"You had better wait for me in the bar, George," said the farmer; and then he closed the door.

"There is no one now to overhear us, and consequently no one to betray us," he continued, as he fixed his gaze keenly on the elder sailor. "Your name is William Franklin, I think."

The man started in amazement, not quite unmingled with anger, perhaps, before he replied—

"You have heard my name, sir, in that paper which was just now read; and I don't know why you should charge me with having any other."

"Well, it is unpolite, to be sure; but you must make allowances for a bush life, such as mine has been for twenty years; and we'll say, then, that you are Richard Adams. In that case, I may ask what interest you can have in the discovery of——of the person named in that advertisement of yours?" Mr. Wilson said this with a smile.

It was enough. The next moment, the sailor—Adams or Franklin—had grasped the hand of the farmer; his cheeks blanched, his lips quivering, his whole frame trembling with

uncontrollable emotion. "Have pity on me, sir!" he sobbed. "Tell me, sir; my wife!—my poor, poor Letty!" He could say no more; it was with difficulty that he had uttered these disjointed words; but he looked up so imploringly, that if Mr. Wilson had entertained a thought of approaching the subject by a diplomatic and roundabout way, he at once abandoned the intention.

"I see, I see!" he said, wringing the suppliant's hand; "don't kneel to me, my good friend;" for Franklin (we give him back his name now) had bowed and bent himself in the agony of his suspense; "answer me one question only; this person for whom you were about to advertise—Martha White *you* call her here, Letty Franklin *I* call her—is she your wife? Is she this young man's mother?"

"Yes, sir, yes; yes, yes—if living—if——" Once more utterance failed; and the man who, not half an hour before, had been praised and thanked for hardihood, daring, fearlessness, bravery, courage—who had battled with storms, sickness, death, and the roused passions of a herd of criminals without flinching—now wept and sobbed like a child, on the breast of his son.

"You will excuse my father, sir," said Willy (we give back to him also his true name now); "you would excuse him if you did but know all," he added, proudly though sadly.

"I know enough—have seen enough for that already," said the farmer, quietly: "but we need not talk about that now; your father seeks his wife; you, your mother; in a few hours you may both have your wish, if you will."

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Mr. Wilson and his son had ridden their own horses into Sydney, and other two were soon procured. A hasty meal was despatched, and then the four men mounted and started on their journey. Very soon the port and town were left behind;



barracks and Government buildings were passed; as they galloped along the convict-made road (the Paramatta road now), gangs of sullen men raised their heads as the horsemen brushed by them, and then bent themselves again to their heavy labour. The elder Franklin shuddered as he passed, in memory of more than twenty years ago; but he did not speak. Presently the rough and rude road ended, and the travellers entered the wilderness, which, desolate and monotonous and cheerless as it seemed, had this advantage over other wildernesses, that its hard soil was scantily covered with underwood, and permitted the travellers to thread their way with tolerable rapidity between and among the clumps of forest trees with which it was studded.

Here the horsemen drew bit and bridle, and rested for a short space, while for the first time they exchanged briefly those histories with which the reader is already acquainted. Softening, as much as he could, the story of poor Letty's long mental alienation, and her more recent affliction, Mr. Wilson inspired the father and son with hope of a happy re-union; and again the travellers pressed forward. Guided by infallible way-marks, with which the Wilsons were sufficiently conversant, they passed rapidly through the apparently interminable forest, skirting fearful precipices, passing through gloomy ravines, and over dry water-courses, until day declined.

"We are near home now," said Mr. Wilson, as the wilderness gradually cleared, and opened to view a broad and pleasant plain; "and it will be better that I should ride forward and prepare our poor Martha for the joyful surprise that awaits her." But, as we have seen, this intention was frustrated. Say, if you please, that animal instinct, sometimes more acute than human reasoning, suddenly asserted its power; or say that, once again, a short delirium regained ascendancy over her

mind ; or say that the mind, already pre-occupied with thoughts of her long-lost husband and son, and with the object of her protector's journey to the port, connected these thoughts with the unexpected appearance of four horsemen where only two were looked for, and strangers were few ; or say, lastly, that some well-remembered trick of equestrianism, with which the wife was once familiar, as she had watched for her husband's return from market or fair, or, before that time, had watched for her lover's visits, and was made the happier by them—say that this old trick and well-remembered gesture reached her eye before the countenance could be distinguished :—take one or all of these conjectures, and you may account for the sudden impulse under the influence of which poor Letty Franklin started from her mistress's side, and cleft her way with wild resolution and frantic eagerness towards the elder stranger, to cast herself into his arms, crying, "Husband, husband !" as he sprang to the ground and opened them to press to his heart his long-lost wife.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### BURIED LOVE.

**I**N attaching himself to the fortunes of his father, when the relationship was discovered, Willy Franklin had obeyed the strong impulses of nature ; and when the consequences of this step stared him in the face, he did not weakly shrink from them. At the same time, he could not but feel their weight. He had hoped, indeed, to escape the alternative so soon to be put before him ; had fancied that the affection of his life-long benefactor towards himself would triumph over his old enmity against his father ; and he had so warmly and energetically, yet

with so much respect and tenderness, pleaded that father's cause, in the letter which announced the discovery he had made, that he was sanguine as to its favourable result. But this effort having failed, and failed so signally as to leave no hope of a change in the old squire's mind, he accepted the heavy draught upon his fortitude, and saw, if not with an unmoved yet with a steadfast heart, the fading away of all his bright and glowing prospects.

The necessity for action, consequent on his re-union with his father, was so far favourable to young Franklin that it left him little leisure for unavailing regrets; and the perils and hardships of the voyage now just over (in which he and his father had, for the sake of husbanding their limited resources, worked out their passage as common sailors), had given ample occupation to him, and so prevented his dwelling with harrowed feelings on the past. Again, the meeting with his mother, and the novelty of his position as a son of living parents, whom he had from his earliest years been taught to believe were dead, tended for a little while to ward off the reflection, that in finding those parents he had lost those who had heretofore filled up their vacant place in his heart, and to whom he himself had now become virtually dead. And then there was Ellen. Was there hope or comfort in thinking of her? None; for if the cold, measured, and contemptuous dismissal from Ellen's mother were set aside, how could he reasonably expect to repass the great gulf which those new circumstances and relationships of his had opened between them? As far as he could see, his lot was irrevocably fixed as the denizen of a wilderness, toiling for subsistence; for the same motives which had led him to link his fortunes with those of his parents, forbade the thought of his return to England while they lived; and if eventually he should be freed from these filial bonds, and he should seek to re-enter

the profession he had abandoned, the distance between his formerly affianced wife and himself would yet be too great to be surmounted. And even if by long and toilsome efforts he should succeed at last in paving a way for himself to fame and fortune, was he entitled to expect that Ellen would then be waiting, and willing to renew the tie which had been so ruthlessly severed? There are not many things in the future which an ardent impassioned lover cannot see, if he will; but Willy Franklin could not see this.

And so, a few days after the events recorded in our last chapter took place, young Franklin sat down and wrote his farewell letter, and restored to Ellen Murray her troth. No doubt it cost the poor fellow terrible pain to do this; for it is hard to bury out of sight an affection which has so grown and flourished through long years as to have become part of one's very nature. But Willy did this; and from thenceforth Ellen was to be to him as though she had never been—as though he had never drank into his soul, in sweet intoxicating draughts, the whispered avowal of the maiden's love.

Willy Franklin wrote other letters also, sorely to the diminution of good George Wilson's small stock of treasured foolscap, to say nothing of pens and ink. The first of these letters was to Miles Oakley the younger, to whose care he also committed that which he had written to Ellen, acutely arguing that he could not otherwise be assured of its reaching her hands. In writing to Miles, poor Willy opened the sluices of his heart, and poured out in copious measure the sorrows which oppressed him. This was the sum and substance of his letter, though it was mixed up with equally sincere declarations of undiminished affection towards Miles, and of unswerving gratitude to Miles's parents.

To the old squire himself (notwithstanding the terrible

breach which had been made between them, and the restrictions which had been laid on him), Willy addressed a manly letter of thanks for past favours and love, and of heartfelt regret that strong and overpowering duty, as he viewed it, should have snapped asunder the ties which had existed. He closed his communication by invoking blessings on his former benefactors, whom he implored to think of him, the writer, as favourably as their kind hearts might dictate.

To Martha White—the true Martha—Willy Franklin wrote with more fulness and freedom about his parents and himself, than in either of the fore-mentioned letters, first, because he was desirous of exonerating his mother from blame in not having corresponded with poor Martha, according to her promise, and next, because intelligence would thus reach Mrs. Oakley concerning himself. And having thus discharged his obligations to his several correspondents, Willy set about planning for his future course.

It was fortunate for the Franklins that they had fallen into good hands in making acquaintance with the Wilsons. In pursuance of the farmer's advice, the small sum of money they had brought with them was laid out, partly in the purchase of land adjoining his own, and partly in stocking it with sheep. With the assistance of their friend and adviser, they then reared for themselves a cabin on their own land, but within a mile of Wilson's settlement; and thither they shortly afterwards removed, but not until Mrs. Wilson, with a kind of motherly anxiety and interest, had deprived herself of many personal comforts, to add to those of her faithful companion, poor Letty.

It was a matter of consideration whether the re-united family should retain the name under which the father and son had recently entered the colony, or resume that under which the

convict had been formerly known there. But it was argued by George Wilson, that the chance of recognition would be as great under an assumed designation as under a true. And he stated further, that so many radical changes had taken place in the penal government, both in the system itself, including the treatment of prisoners, and in the executive, that if Franklin should be recognised as an escaped convict, no notice would be taken of him, especially as the full term of his transportation had expired. In accordance with these opinions, the Richard Adams of our history was once more known as William Franklin.

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## CHAPTER XII.

AFTER TWO YEARS—THE BOOTH, GOURD, AND WORM—  
CLOSING SCENES.

TWO years passed away quietly ; for though, by some means or other, it became whispered abroad that the emigrant farmer Franklin was one and the same with the convict of that name who had disappeared from the settlement more than twenty years before, and was supposed to have perished in the bush, Mr. Wilson's prediction that no trouble would spring from this suspicion was fulfilled. Meanwhile, the father and son, with a good deal of help from their prosperous neighbour and friend, cultivated some part of their land, and tended their sheep.

We could wish to be able to add, that this primitive and secluded life brought with it either the freedom from care or the contentment which some poets delight in depicting as the natural accompaniments of pastoral and rural pursuits, and which others who are not poets, believe (until they have tried

the experiment) to be expressly ordained for those whom want of success, or dissatisfaction, or a roaming disposition, or a love of adventure, or any other reason why, has thrust or led into an emigrant's life. But, being bound to adhere as closely as possible to truth (without which element, indeed, the legitimate purpose of such narratives as this would be worse than frustrated), we must state that the Franklins, at this stage of their history, were not exempt from disappointment and grief. To poor Letty, indeed, the restoration of her husband and son was fraught with joy and gladness, and it formed a constant theme for gratitude to her heavenly Father. But even this joy, which caused her sometimes to feel that her cup was running over, was not unmixed with sorrow. She could see that her husband, while rejoicing in her constant love, and returning it with equal constancy, was moody and unsatisfied, and rebellious in heart. The things which he had suffered still stung him in their remembrance. The measure of injustice and harshness which had been dealt out to him rankled in his soul, and weakened the peace which, with clearer light thrown upon them by the gospel of Christ, he might otherwise have enjoyed.

"It sounds well, dear Letty," he one day said to his wife, when she was trying to comfort him, "and no doubt it is very proper, to speak of our present mercies, and of the overruling hand of God in our being thus brought together again; but I am not going to forget that the best portion of your life and of mine has been spent in wretchedness and hardship and suffering. And when I think of what we might have been, and compare it with what we are, I am very little disposed to forgive the man whose oppressions——"

"Say mistakes, dear William," interposed Letty.

"Well, mistakes if you will—whose mistakes blasted our

happiness and ruined our hopes.” And from this position Franklin seemed to be determined that he would not be moved.

With regard to her son, Letty had to sustain a yet harder trial of her faith. True, Willy made no verbal proclamation of the frustration of his prospects in life; true, he never swerved in his filial duty, was never remiss in affectionate bearing towards his newly-found mother. But Letty was keen-sighted enough to discover that she held, at best, only his divided allegiance, and that his thoughts were often very far away. Poor Letty accepted this as a just and necessary discipline, and as the natural result of her own abandonment of her child so many years before; but it was a grievous chastisement, notwithstanding.

“Dear Willy,” she said one evening, as weeping she leaned on his strong arm—for Letty could walk but a short distance without help now—“I have been thinking so much—so much about you to-day.”

“Have you, mother?”

“I have been thinking, Willy, how much happier you would have been now, if you had never met with your poor father in the way you did, and if I had never been found by you.”

“Mother!”

“Is it not so, Willy?”

“Have I ever said so? Have I ever breathed a syllable that you can justly interpret so—so sorrowfully!” Cruelly, he would have said; but he changed the word.

“Never, Willy: but——”

“Do not pursue the subject, dear mother; let us think and speak of something else,” he said; and he began to talk of the Wilsons and their kindness. But the mother was not to be deceived; and she silently sorrowed for her son, while she



prayed that his secret sorrows might be sanctified to his soul's good.

And thus two years passed away. In all this time Willy Franklin had received no replies from either of his correspondents, and he accepted this as a token that he was willingly forgotten. It was bitter enough to be so cast aside.

At this time, however, his sympathies and anxieties were diverted from his own private griefs. His mother, who had gradually declined in strength from the time of her recovery from mental alienation, now lay prostrated in the final stage of consumption, and lingered out the last dregs of life from day to day, only to show, as it might have seemed, how the consolations of religion and hopes of immortality and eternal life can support the soul amid the decays of nature, so that while the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed, strengthened, and its meekness completed for the heavenly inheritance.

Thus, at least, Willy Franklin thought; and in the latest interviews with his dying mother, he not only recognised in himself such an increase of childlike attachment as made it hard to part, but learned such solemn yet inestimable lessons of the infinite value of the things which are not seen and are eternal, compared with those which are seen and temporal, as exercised a marvellously beneficial influence over him ever afterwards.

A few months later, and the grave of Letty Franklin, which had been dug in the garden of the solitary emigrant hut, was re-opened to receive the body of her husband. From the day of her death he had declined, and, with no specific or acute malady, had gradually sunk till death closed the earthly scene. In his last hours delirium set in, and with Willy's hand in his own, he seemed to be reacting in memory those portions of life's drama in which he had saved his son from danger, captivity, or death.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## DISTURBING TIDINGS.

SEVERAL months glided by, and brought few changes outwardly to the surviving hero of our story. Franklin's life was solitary enough; for though he occasionally mixed with his friends and only near neighbours, the Wilsons, and became attached to them, a great part of his time was necessarily spent on his own land, or in the retirement of his own hut, with no other companionship than that of two faithful dogs and two not very unfaithful convict men, whom (both dogs and men) he had added to his establishment since the death of his father and mother.

In his farming and grazing operations he had succeeded indifferently well. The colony was at that time increasing in prosperity; and as Franklin was not deficient in energy, and had neither the necessity nor the inclination to expend the profits he made, those gains were, if not rapidly, yet safely accumulating. So, though he was not backward in avowing that the life of an emigrant and a bush farmer was not the life he should have chosen of his own free will, it is probable that before long he would have settled himself down in it, if not with complete contentment, with a kind of placid resignation, but for a circumstance which awakened in his mind all the chequered past, and recalled him to vigorous action.

Thus we have sometimes seen, when a rivulet has been dammed up and diverted from its natural channel, how quietly and unresistingly it has submitted itself to this new guidance until the obstruction has been in part removed. And then, with what a swelling, tumultuous determination have the

waters returned to the old and forsaken bed, and rushed forward again between its neglected and withering banks!

The circumstance which brought about this change in Franklin's plans, and impelled him to re-enter the scenes which he had believed to be finally closed, was the arrival at Sydney of a mail containing three letters addressed to himself, and which, though written at considerably distant intervals, reached him at the same moment of time.

It should be added, that Franklin had been now more than three years in the colony, and that, though he had written to England on two occasions—namely, on his first arrival, as we have already seen, and on the death of his parents—these were the first letters he had received. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that he hastened, with some eagerness, to possess himself of their contents.

The first he opened, which was written in a formal, cramped hand, proved to be from Mr. Peake, the lawyer, with whom our readers formed some acquaintance in the first part of this history. Its purport was to give an account of the writer's stewardship of the money entrusted to him so many years before, and which the death of William Franklin the elder left him free to pay over to his son and legal representative. It appeared further, that the original sum had been so well employed as to have more than doubled itself by lawful compound interest, under the lawyer's careful nursing, and that it was now vested in Franklin's name in certain securities, until advice should be received of its final disposal. Supposing, however, that some portion of the property might be immediately useful to his correspondent, Mr. Peake had presumed to abstract a certain amount from the sum total, which he enclosed in bills, payable at sight upon a newly-founded bank in Sydney. Wishing his client all joy and prosperity, and so forth and

so forth, the writer begged to remain a very obedient humble servant.

Franklin threw this letter aside with more indifference than usually befalls such an announcement as it contained (he took care of the bills, however), and opened the next that came to hand. The writer was Martha White, who, not being of Oakley extraction and education, was so far in advance of that community as to have, at least, some knowledge of penmanship.

"Dear Mr. William," the letter began (we correct the misspelling which occasionally crops out):—"Your kind and welcome letter came safely, and I don't know how to thank you enough for taking so much trouble as to tell me all I most wanted to know. What a pleasure and blessing it must have been to you and your father (my own poor William, that I first knew when he was only a boy), to find your mother and his darling Letty so well cared for, and in such kind good hands! I shall never cease to pray God to bless those dear Wilsons, for all their love and service to the poor thing who was not able to fend for herself, being so distracted like for so many weary years; and no wonder. Oh, my precious Letty! To think of the dear creature having been so long afflicted! I could not help crying when I came to that part of your letter, Mr. William; and yet, when I think of it, it seems to me as if it was all meant for good; for she could not have borne that greater trouble of hers else. And so we may see how kind and tender our heavenly Father is, in fitting the back to the burden, as one may say. And then, to think of her coming to herself again, at the very time you and your father were going out in search of her. And how wonderful it was, too, your falling in with Mr. Wilson the very day after you landed. It reads like a story out of a book, it does, and almost too good to be true.

"And poor Letty (your mother, I mean; but I can't help

calling her Letty) asked me to look over her not writing to me in all those years. Why, bless her dear heart! how could she write? I am sure I can look over harder things than that. It is happiness enough for poor Martha White to know now that you are all so happy, as you must be in meeting again, and in having a farm of your own, though it is so far away from the old country. And if it was not for having it put upon me in such a way as I cannot alter, to take care of old Mrs. Franklin, your grandmother, I would not mind crossing the water, and working for you all again, as I used to do—dear me!—when you were only a little thing in arms; and a bouncing baby you were, too; I remember that.

“But I ought not to think of going away from here, while I can be of any use; and who knows but you may all be coming home again, some of these days? and there’s nothing to hinder it, is there? And then you’ll be wanting poor old Martha to be ready to receive you, as I did your father once before. To be sure, Mr. William, you would not be so grand and looked up to as you were when you lived at ‘The Oaks;’ but that’s not a thing you ought to mind.

“My old head runs on much faster than I can put things down, and I shall leave out lots, I know: but I must not forget to tell you about my poor mistress—your father’s mother, I mean. She is as well in health as she has been for a long time, and seems likely, as old as she is, to last a good many years yet to come. But her mind is quite gone now, so that she is like a child. She is pleased to be handling money, though she does not seem to know what it is: and a penny is as good to her as a crown: so I let her have a bag full of coppers, which she turns out in her lap and puts back again fifty times a day or more; poor thing! As to the little farm, I do the best to carry it on for them that will have to come

A LETTER FROM THE OLD COUNTRY.





after; and I am keeping everything as clear as I can, so as to be able to give a good account of all matters.

"I must tell you that I sometimes see Madam Oakley, but not so often as I used; for I am afraid she has troubles of her own, which she did not use to have. I know she is troubled about you—she calls you her Willy—and would be glad to see you back again, only she must not say so. But there is another trouble which it does not become me to talk about; and I would not mention it even to you, only I know you will feel for the kind-hearted lady. The trouble is about Mr. Miles, her son, who goes on very badly in many ways more than I dare mention. I hear, however (but not from Madam), that he is going to be married and settle down. He told me this himself one day, when he rode up to our cottage. He did not tell me the lady's name, only that it is Ellen; but I know it must be Miss Murray.

"I hope it is not true, Mr. William, that you had set your love on that young lady, as I have heard, and that you have been turned off to make room for the young squire. I can't believe of him that he would do anything so bad as that— . . ."

Now, if it should be asked why, on reaching this part of Martha White's letter, Franklin suddenly changed countenance, started as though he had been stung by a venomous insect, and otherwise exhibited many marks of strong discomposure—seeing that he had long before resigned his pretensions to Ellen Murray's hand, and buried his hopes of ever making her his wife—we can only reply that our hero was so little of a hero, after all, as to be exceedingly susceptible of common and everyday emotions, feelings, passions, call them what you will. In fact, the hopelessness of gaining Ellen had weighed with him in seeking the discharge, which he obtained from the Admiralty



after immense trouble, and not without much influence being used in his behalf. He had now no motive, he said, for ambition. It was very foolish in him, no doubt, to crush poor Martha's letter in his great big fist, as though he would have squeezed out the offending sentences, if he could; and very weak in him to brush the fellow-fist across his eyes impatiently. And, probably, Franklin was very unreasonable, when he exclaimed within himself against the treachery and falsehood of one who had so long been his bosom friend and companion, and was entirely mistaken when he declared, still to himself, that if it had been any other than Miles, he would have been rather glad than sorry to know that Ellen's heart had not been quite broken by the fiat of separation which had half-broken his own. It was positively ridiculous, perhaps, in him to remember how he had once magnanimously offered Miles Oakley the treasure which he had now, out of mere wantonness (of course) stooped to filch; and how, not so long ago, he had opened his heart to this same traitor, and had intrusted him with his secret determination to win back the prize of his life. But, then, no one can guess beforehand what foolish, weak, unreasonable, ridiculous and altogether unaccountable things a despairing lover may think, say, or do, even on the slender foundation of an unconfirmed report or a bare suspicion. We may let all this pass.

"If he had only written to me himself," said poor Willy, when his first foolish paroxysms were over, and the first hot tears he had shed for many a day were yet moistening his cheeks—"If he had only first written to me, I should not have minded it so much. I would not have stood in the way of his happiness—and hers—he need not have been afraid of that."

And then Franklin remembered that he had not read the whole of Martha's letter; and that he had another unopened one in his hand.

There was not much more in Martha's, which ended with hoping that "Mr. William" was wiser than she had been, who left her soul to take care of itself till she was an old woman, and with sending her love and dutiful obedience to her dear mistress and master.

There was no date to the letter; but, from internal evidence, Franklin gathered that it was written soon after his first despatches reached home, certainly before his second arrived. Probably the letter had been mislaid and delayed, or miscarried, which was nothing very extraordinary in those days; and the wonder was that it had reached him at all, for the direction on it was obscure and enigmatical.

Franklin now opened the third and remaining letter. It was of a later date; and the writer was Lucy Oakley. It ran thus:—

"MY DEAR WILLY,—I am in great trouble—such great trouble that I don't know how to write; but I must. Poor Miles! poor boy! He has so angered his father, that he says he will never forgive him, never see him again. There has been cause enough, for our poor boy has behaved very shamefully; I cannot deny this, though he is my own son; and he has ended all by making a sad match—a runaway marriage, without our knowing it. I am ashamed to tell you who he has married; but you know the young person very well. This has made my poor husband so angry. But, then, you know how determined he is: and this makes him unjust when he thinks he is doing right.

"He has made a new will—my husband, I mean—he had the lawyer with him yesterday; and after he was gone, my husband showed me what he had done. He has not shut our poor boy out of the will quite: but he has left him only a hundred

pounds a-year for as long as he lives; for he says that the children of 'that Nell' shall never come into his property.

"The whole of the property—all his estates, and everything except that hundred a-year, is left to you after his death and mine—he having no relatives in the world whom he cares for or knows, and because he owes you heavy compensation for injustice done to your father in old times, and to yourself later. This is what my husband has put in his will, though he has never said as much before. And he speaks of you so lovingly, too, while the tears run down his cheeks.

"But, dear Willy, I know your generous loving nature so well, that I am sure you will not wish to be enriched in this way; and what I ask you to do is to intercede with poor Miles's father on his behalf. I have done it on my knees almost, and he will not listen to me; but if you would only write to him—he will have had time then for consideration; and if you could only persuade him to seek out our poor boy, and save him from going quite to ruin, I am sure it would make your heart richer, though it should make your worldly estate poorer. Do write, Willy, just such a letter as your kind, loving, forgiving heart will tell you to write.

"I cannot say any more, only that my poor dear is laid up with the gout very badly, and suffers, oh, so much! And this makes him more angry with poor Miles.

"I am, dear Willy,

"Your afflicted friend,

"LUCY OAKLEY.

"P.S.—I forgot to say that our poor infatuated Miles is travelling about the country now (so I am told) with a set of play-actors. His wife is with him, and they both go upon the stage.

Could you have dreamed such a thing, Willy? But it was partly our fault, sending the poor boy to that Saint Radigunds, where he got into company, and all sorts of mischief that we little thought of at the time."

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## CHAPTER XIV.

## MAGNANIMOUS RESOLUTIONS AND PERPLEXING THOUGHTS.

THE next morning found Franklin at George Wilson's settlement.

"I am going to England," he said abruptly.

"To England? When? Why?" asked his friend.

"As to the when—by the first ship that sails. As to the why—read." And Franklin put Mrs. Oakley's letter into Wilson's hand. "I will go in and talk to Mrs. Wilson while you are reading," he added.

Half an hour afterwards he returned.

"You have read the letter, I see; do you ask now why I am going to England?"

"No; I think I understand: you trust more to the argument of the tongue than of the pen?"

"I do. I tried the pen once before, and failed. Now I will try the tongue."

"'Blessed are the peace-makers;' but suppose you should not succeed?"

"I shall be then but where I now am. But I shall succeed, I hope," said Franklin.

"I doubt it; your interference will only endanger your own interests without helping on your friend's."

"My interests! Do you suppose, then, that I should ever succeed to that property?"

"Why not? The will would be valid, I suppose. The estate is not entailed, of course, or such a will could not be made."

"Such a will would be valid in a court of law, I have no doubt; for Miles Oakley's property is unentailed, I know; but it would not pass in a court of conscience."

"In your own particular court of conscience, you mean. And this is one of the things I like in you, Franklin; your heart is in the right place——"

"If my head is not, you would say," added Franklin.

"I did not say so, and do not think so; but we won't argue about that. Surely, however, there is no occasion for you to go to England to get that will cancelled. If the property should come to you at your old patron's death, you may do what you like with your own; and a deed of gift——"

"Ah, but you know where and by whom we are taught to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.' I won't trust myself to such a contingency, if I can put it away from me. Besides, what would a voyage, or twenty voyages, be, compared with the chance of bringing about a reconciliation between father and son, and so restoring happiness to my more than mother?"

"Well, I see you are determined, so I will say no more. But, pray, who is this damsel-errant who has made such a pretty kettle of fish at 'The Oaks,' as I think the old house at home is called? Some black-eyed gipsy, I suppose; a game-keeper's daughter, or what not?" said Mr. Wilson, unconscious of the sting his words inflicted, and which unconsciousness makes it plain that he had not been intrusted with the dear secret and great trouble of his young friend's history. Immediately he had uttered the words, however, he perceived that he had somehow made a blunder, and he hastened to apologise.

"Don't say another word," said Franklin, recovering himself;

“some day you shall know all; but to pass now to another subject. I want your advice. I may be absent two or three years; what shall I do with my farm?”

“Keep it going, that’s my advice; and as advice without help is cheap, I shall offer my help as well. Leave your affairs here in my hands, and I will be as faithful a steward as I can be.”

“I am sure of that; and it is the very thing I wished to ask, but dared not. I accept your offer, therefore, as heartily as it is offered,” said Franklin, gratefully.

“You embolden me to make another offer,” resumed the friendly farmer. “You are well enough to do in colonial property; but you cannot carry it with you. You must borrow——”

“I have no occasion to borrow,” interposed Franklin: and he showed his friend the letter he had received from the old lawyer.

That same day Franklin started off to Sydney, and, on arriving, found that a ship would leave the port for England within a fortnight. He took his passage accordingly, returned to the bush, arranged his affairs with Mr. Wilson, and then bade farewell to his friends and his home.

It was not until he was fairly on board, and fairly out at sea also, that Franklin gave himself time to consider in all its bearings the intelligence which had wrought so great and sudden a change in his course, and to ask himself what he intended to do on reaching England. And the more he thought, the more he was perplexed. These were some of his thoughts.

His first thought was, that he had no anger remaining against his former friend for marrying Ellen Murray. Why should he be angry? But he was puzzled to account for the terms in which this marriage was mentioned in Mrs. Oakley’s letter, and

for the fierce resentment of the old squire which it had evoked. That Miles's parents wished for a more aristocratic alliance for their only son than that into which he had entered, Franklin very well knew; but he was not prepared to find that such an alliance would be considered by them as so disgraceful as to merit banishment from home and disinheritance. So far from this, he might reasonably have believed that love for Miles and parental interest in his happiness would have readily reconciled them to the disappointment of their own more ambitious hopes; especially he thought so when he remembered how the old squire himself had, in the opinion of some, contracted an inferior marriage, and had vindicated himself for so doing, as Franklin had heard; and more especially still he thought so, when he remembered what a favourite (and a deserved favourite, too, Franklin mentally added, with a gentle sigh)—what a favourite poor Ellen had ever been at "The Oaks."

Another thought which perplexed Franklin was not that Ellen should have been persuaded, under any circumstances, to accept Miles Oakley as her husband. He knew the strong maternal influence which would be brought to bear upon her to obtain her consent, and he was not inclined to charge that young lady with inconstancy and fickleness because she had chosen a new love when the old love was hopelessly lost. Ay, more than this; Franklin would, or thought he would, have forgiven her had she, dazzled by more brilliant prospects than his had ever been, when at the best, discarded him in favour of the heir of Oakley, had the heir of Oakley been worthy of her heart. But what perplexed him was that Ellen, whom he delighted to remember as one of the purest-minded and simplest-hearted, as well as the most lovely of her sex, should have secretly and clandestinely married one over whom, as he partly knew, and as the letters he had received confirmed, low and de-

grading vice had obtained a mastery. It was a mystery to poor Franklin, as well as a deep and abiding sorrow, that the name of Ellen Murray should be coupled with those ominous words, "a runaway match," and that she herself should thus be coupled with one who, in other respects, was unworthy of her.

And yet another thought plunged our hero into deep mental confusion, as well as dismay. That Ellen Murray, with all her womanly modesty, should, under any conceivable circumstances, be induced to adopt the stage as a profession, was to him a source of profound wonder; and that her parents, even if displeased with her (of which, however, no mention was made in Mrs. Oakley's letter), should permit their only and darling Ellen, supposing her to have submitted to the degradation, to descend so low as to be the associate of strolling players, and exposed to the terrible temptations, to say nothing of the inconveniences and discomforts, and probable privations of such a calling, was almost incredible.

Without enlarging on these and kindred topics, it is sufficient to say that William Franklin ended his voyage in as great perplexity and sorrow as he commenced it, but with an increasing determination in his soul to give himself no rest, to spare no exertions of body or of mind, and to sacrifice the last shilling of his recently acquired inheritance, in the attempt to rescue his once-loved Ellen from the worst consequences of her imprudence, and in laying the foundation, at least, of a reconciliation between the old squire and his erring son.

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## CHAPTER XV.

## THE SQUIRE OF OAKLEY IN A NEW MOOD.

AFTER a long and stormy voyage, our young bush-farmer reached London; and, in pursuance of his resolution to devote, if necessary, the whole of his available resources to the object before him, and to expend as little as possible on his own personal comfort, he caused his luggage to be conveyed to a small and cheap lodging, in the third or fourth floor of a house in the City, which he engaged for a week. From this temporary, and not very luxurious home, he wrote to his friend Mrs. Oakley, announcing his return from New South Wales, and soliciting such information as would assist him in the course he had set before him.

If it should be asked why Franklin did not at once proceed to "The Oaks," it is sufficient to say, that he naturally shrunk from revisiting scenes which would remind him of his lost happiness. What was Oakley to him, or he to Oakley? What could it ever be more? No, he would not, if he could help it, return to that now desolated spot: if possible, when his quest should be successfully ended, he would obtain a meeting with his old benefactors, in London or elsewhere—anywhere rather than Oakley—and then he would hasten back to the distant colony, plunge himself into his old solitude, live there such a life as was ordained for him, and for which, after all, he was perhaps best fitted, and would try to forget that such a place as Oakley had ever existed.

So Franklin shut himself up in his lonely lodgings, and waited as patiently as his nature would permit him to wait, during the interval which he expected to elapse before he could receive an answer to his letter.

On the afternoon of the fifth day after his arrival, as Franklin was sitting at his open window, and contrasting the noise and bustle and confusion of the busy London street far below him with the quiet repose of his hut in the wilderness, so many thousands of miles away, his reverie was disturbed by the sound of heavy footsteps on the stairs, ascending higher and higher towards his room. Occasionally they ceased for a second or two, as though the owner of that ponderous tread were pausing to take breath ; then they recommenced. Before Franklin had done wondering who the visitor could be, his door was saluted by a gentle rap or two ; and on his shouting "Come in," it opened, and the Squire of Oakley was standing before him.

"My dear boy—my dear Willy!" said he, extending both his hands, which Franklin grasped. He tried to say more, but his voice failed him, and he was fain to turn away to hide his emotion, laying the blame, however, on the steep narrow staircase he had been climbing. "They told me, at the bottom, to go up as far as I could go, and I should find you," he went on, as he plumped into a seat, and mopped his hot face with his ample bandanna: "and so I came up and up; but it seemed as if I had got into the Monument by mistake. But never mind: here I am; and now, my dear boy, the first thing we have to do is to get you out of this horrible den." The squire looked round contemptuously on the bare walls of the chamber, which measured some ten feet by eight, as he said this. "Phew! there isn't room to breathe. You must come to my hotel in Piccadilly while you stay in town, which won't be long, I hope. And why you did not run down to 'The Oaks' at once, passes my comprehension."

Franklin had ample time, while the squire was saying this, and more to the same purport, to notice what a change had passed over his old friend and benefactor in the years which had

elapsed since they last met. It was not that he was shrunken and decayed. As far as his person was concerned, Miles Oakley bore the load of three-score and fifteen years, or thereabouts, vigorously and healthily. If there were any difference, he was stouter than of yore, and his tread, though affected by occasional attacks of gout, was firm and strong. But his countenance was deeply furrowed, as only care or pain could have furrowed it. Wrinkles, broad and wide, indented his forehead, over which his hair, now white as driven snow, assisted by a slight touch of powder, lay in thin and scanty flakes; from the corners of his eyes were spread out those peculiar marks known as "crows'-feet," and which sorrow sooner than aught else produces; his mouth had lost its genial smile; and in spite of the heat of the day (for it was near midsummer), and the recent exertion of mounting the stairs, a pallid yellow hue overspread the cheeks of the old man, instead of the healthy, rosy bloom to which Franklin had been accustomed.

So impressed and affected was Franklin by this alteration, that before replying to the exordium of his old friend, he rather awkwardly gave expression to a hope that he had not been suffering from recent illness.

"Illness! Never better in my life, Willy," he said hastily. "I can't understand what people mean by telling me I look ill. Why, I had myself weighed only last week, and found I had gained half a stone within the last six months; and that is not being ill, I hope."

Franklin hoped not also, and apologised for his mistake.

"No apologies, no apologies," rejoined the squire, heartily: "no need for 'em. And if it were not impertinent, I should say that you are looking no great things, Willy. If you were not an old sailor, I should say it is the voyage hasn't agreed with you; but 'tis being poked up in this garret day after day,





ESQUIRE OAKLEY AND YOUNG FRANKLIN ARRIVE AT THE HOTEL IN PICCADILLY.

where the air is so thick from London smoke and the foul breath of the people below, that there's no seeing anything clearly. So, if you are ready to get as far out of it as possible, I am."

The squire was evidently so much in earnest, and made an instant removal so much a condition or a necessity of free intercourse, that there was nothing to do but to submit. And the carriage which had brought Mr. Oakley into the City being yet in the street, no time was lost in discharging the small debt already incurred for Franklin's board and lodging. This done, they proceeded immediately to Piccadilly.

"And now," said the squire, when the dinner he had previously ordered was despatched, and the waiters had retired, leaving the guests and their wine together—"and now, Willy, before anything else comes upon the carpet, I must tell you how it happened that I came to London: it was my Lucy that sent me."

"It was like her kindness," said Franklin.

"Yes, she sent me. 'How can you expect Willy to come here,' said she, 'till you have told him all you have to tell?' And so I am here to say it, Willy."

"It is very kind of you, sir," was all Willy could say.

"Not at all; only an act of justice, my dear boy—I must call you so, in spite of your manhood; but you are our boy, you know, and always will be. Well, it is only an act of justice. I have done you great wrong, and so poor Lucy has told me many a time, when I would not listen to her."

"I have never accused you, even in my heart, of doing *me* a wrong, sir," said Franklin, with some degree of embarrassment; for though he thought as he spoke, it was with this mental reservation—you cruelly wronged my father. But he did not say this; he only added, "Your generosity to me from my very

childhood—" when the squire interrupted him, speaking tremulously—

"Don't talk of generosity, Willy. I ruined your father. It was a terrible mistake of mine; but I hope and believe that you know that it was a mistake."

"I am sure it was a mistake. I never for a moment have thought otherwise."

"Thank you; thank you. It is something to hear you say that; and I am thankful to have found out my error, though the discovery has made me miserable—how miserable I cannot tell you. You spoke just now of my looking ill. There is no wretchedness like that of a wounded spirit, Willy—a mind diseased, Willy. Can you not pity me?"

"With all my heart and soul," replied Franklin, fervently.

"And forgive—say that you can forgive me."

"I have long ago forgiven what there was to forgive, sir: the effects of your mistake, indeed, have fallen lightly on me; what, therefore, have I had personally to forgive? My poor father, indeed——"

"To him I can never make reparation; it is too late, I know, I know; and your mother, Willy?"

"If it be any solace to know that my mother freely forgave you your part in her life-long trial, sir, you may rest assured that she did," rejoined Franklin, glad at heart that he could say this; "and you will be pleased to know," he added, "that the last years of both their lives were passed together in comfort."

"I do know it, and it gives me some relief to be assured of this; but still, the sorrow remains, and I can make no reparation—no reparation for the mischief I wrought. If your parents had lived until now, indeed——"

It was pitiable to see the tears coursing down the old squire's

cheeks as he spoke, until he fairly broke down under the weight of his regrets. Franklin was not prepared for this; and though he thought within himself, that even if his parents had lived, this tardy repentance would have been too late for reparation, because the past could never be recalled, he did not hint this.

"I am an obstinate old fellow, I know," continued the squire, remorsefully; "but I am not quite an ass, I hope; and when I got that letter from Mr. Wilson——"

"From Mr. Wilson? A letter?"

"Yes, your friend Wilson over there. Didn't you know he wrote to me?"

"I am quite ignorant of his having done so," said Franklin, in great surprise.

"Well, but he did, though: it was just after your father's death; and he told me of your father's and your noble conduct in refusing to be paid for saving the lives and property of the passengers on board the ship you went out in. Then he went on to tell me what he had seen and known of you both for two years afterwards, and of your poor mother for more than twenty years; and what he had heard of that unhappy business of ours; and he asked me to believe that he believed your father to have been innocent and unjustly dealt with, and to consider whether some reparation should not be made for all your sufferings. And you say, Willy, that you did not know of Mr. Wilson's writing all this?"

"I entreat you to believe that I knew nothing of it, sir—that I hear it now for the first time," said Franklin, earnestly.

"I do believe it, and I am not sorry for it," continued the squire; "for though it was a right and proper thing to write—well, well, I am glad you didn't know of it: I thought perhaps you might; and there were one or two things in the letter rather cutting, to tell the truth. But it set me thinking,



Willy; and after finding out, first of all, that this Mr. Wilson was a true man, and a gentleman of good connections here at home, and no stuck-up man of straw, I went over the whole affair again in my own mind, with the new light he had thrown upon it; and I compared it with that letter you wrote to me when you first found the sailor Adams to be your father, and which I am ashamed to say I was in too much of a passion to read and understand when I received it; and then I went and had a chat, and a good many chats, with my old neighbour, Anthony Melburn, whom I am ashamed to say I hadn't spoken to for more than twenty years. And the long and short of it is, I found out what a wicked, revengeful, persecuting old fellow I had been, and how my guilt had spread ruin and misery all around—not so wide as might have been, thanks to my Lucy—but so wide as that it could never be undone: and—oh! Willy, Willy, my dear boy, if you could but know how miserable I have been!”

“My dear kind old friend!” broke from Franklin’s lips.

“And then,” continued the squire, “like a stupid, old, obstinate mule as I am, I must needs keep all this trouble to myself for weeks and months, fretting over it, and bringing on the gout, and otherwise making a fool of myself, until Lucy, bless her dear heart! came down upon me, and said that I must and should tell her what ailed my mind. And then I made a clean breast of it, Willy; and a year ago almost, I wrote you a letter, which perhaps you haven’t had. But that does not signify now: for here you are yourself; and you shall go down with me to ‘The Oaks,’ and we’ll have brave doings; and if you go back to that place of yours in the new country, it shall be no fault of mine this time.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

## CONCESSIONS—RESEARCHES COMMENCED.

IN all the foregoing communications, Franklin was surprised that the squire had made no reference to the object of his visit to England, and had evidently avoided any mention of his own son. That he had not spoken of the Murrays, was perhaps natural enough; and Franklin was grateful for this reserve; but at the first favourable opportunity he spoke of Miles.

The squire's brow was immediately overcast.

"Don't speak of him, Willy—the reprobate, the degenerate——"

Franklin laid his hand on his old friend's arm. "You say you owe me something, sir; though I do not see this obligation in the same strong light that you do; but if you owe me anything, pay me in this: let me plead with you for Miles—my foster-brother—the only brother I have ever known."

"You press me cruelly hard, Willy," said the unhappy father, rising and pacing the room in agitation.

Franklin waited till the storm had partially subsided, and the old man had once more sunk into his chair. Then he said—

"For the sake of Miles's mother—for your own sake, my dear, generous benefactor—for the sake of your future happiness, let me speak of him. You have acknowledged one wrong; do not perpetrate another. Your son is very dear to you, Mr. Oakley."

The colour mounted to the squire's cheeks and forehead; but he restrained his feelings. He only said, in a subdued voice, "What would you have, Willy?"

"I want you to listen to me, sir, for a few minutes—only a

few. You know, Mr. Oakley—none better than you—how strong my inducements must have been to forget, as far as it could be possible to forget, all the past, and how great my repugnance to—to reappear on the scene of—of hopes which had for ever faded away. Thank God—and I say this sincerely and reverently—I was enabled to overcome this repugnance, and to meet those inducements with others yet stronger. I am here, then, my kind good friend; I came here with the one single, simple object of taking my feeble part in restoring to you a son—to Miles a father. Suffer me to do this, and to do it in my own way: this is what I would have.”

“You don’t know all, Willy: you cannot know all,” the old squire broke out impetuously. “I know that my Lucy has written to you, and you think you know all, but you have only heard a mother’s version of it. Come, now, what do you know?”

“Nay, it is not for me to parade a son’s faults before his father; and as little would it become me to extenuate them. I know that Miles has justly offended you—that he has, like the prodigal in the parable, wasted your substance with riotous living—that he has dishonoured and disgraced himself and you by the society he himself has chosen——”

“A set of play-actors! a rascally company of strolling players!” broke forth the squire, unable to contain himself. And it seemed as if the force of huge contempt and bitter indignation could go no further than this.

“And added to this,” continued Franklin, “Miles has justly grieved you, my old dear friend, by a clandestine marriage——”

“Speak English, Willy; speak English,” the squire almost roared in his impatience. “Clandestine marriage! Why not say a runaway match; a Gretna Green buckling together by a

scoundrelly blacksmith; or by jumping together over a broomstick, for anything I can tell. Don't say another word for him, Willy; I won't hear it; I can't; I won't bring disgrace on the old Oaks of Oakley by acknowledging that wench for my daughter; I won't bring a blush of shame on my poor Lucy's cheek, by suffering that Nell of Miles's to approach her."

"You speak very hardly and harshly, sir," Franklin could not help saying; "but surely the prime offence given by this most unhappy and needless step was in the want of confidence it betrayed. It required but your consent to have insured a happy and every way beneficial union; and I am persuaded it would not have been withheld."

"You think I should have consented, then—eh?" said the squire, opening wide his eyes, and looking Willy in the face with an expression of blank surprise.

"Yes, sir; I do venture to think that your affection for Miles, and your interest in his happiness, to say nothing of other reasons, would have induced you to look over any slight inequality of birth and station."

"Slight inequality! Ah, yes, to be sure; we are all children of Adam and Eve, I suppose: yes, slight inequality in birth and station—well?"

Franklin saw that his old friend was terribly annoyed, though he could not see why; and somewhat unwisely he pressed the matter home by an *argumentum ad hominem*, a kind of argument which, we are bound to say, few men can listen to with patience, and should therefore be discreetly used.

"I have ventured to hope so," he continued, "because I have heard you yourself express similar sentiments, sir, in reference to your own most happy union with my dearest friend; and——"

The storm burst; but it was mild and gentle. "And so you

would compare my Lucy with—but say no more, Willy: not another word. We won't quarrel; I owe you too much for that. But let us see if we can come to a composition. You say truly that I love my boy; I do love him, Willy; yes I do"—the squire said this passionately, and tears started to his eyes. "You are right in saying that I love Miles; but before I admit that——"

"Hush, sir; hush, for my sake, if not for hers and Miles's," cried Franklin, with a throbbing heart.

"For your sake: well, for your sake I will not say what I was going to say; but let us agree to this: Seek our son: his mother will know how to thank you better than I, Willy; for I am a rugged, crabbed old stock, I know. Seek him, then—detach him, when found, from his companions; bring him back to the feeblest sense of his duty; tell him that his father's house is open to him—to *him* mind; that he shall never hear a word of reproach; that provision shall be made for his future life, amply sufficient for all his wants; and that this is all done at your own earnest petition. Do this, Willy; bring back the poor wanderer—the prodigal—and my heart shall bless you if my tongue is mute."

"I will do all this, sir, or strive to do it," rejoined Franklin; "but pardon me: there is another who must be included in your generous kindness. I am to understand this?"

"Understand nothing but what I have said, Willy," said the old squire. "Or rather, let us understand one another. Who is this other one?"

"Miles's wife, sir. His Ellen."

A hasty exclamation rose to the lips of the squire; but he strangled it. "I had lost sight of her," he said calmly; "but you may tell him this—his wife can never be received as our daughter: I am deceived if she would wish to be thus received;

but there is no telling. So this must be understood. But she is his wife, and she must be thought of. They have joined themselves together, and—yes, she must be thought of. She shall have a home, then—a home far superior to any she could ever have been entitled to, looking at her birth and station; it was you who mentioned birth and station, Willy. She shall have this, and, shall keep her husband too. One only condition shall be annexed, and it will not be a hard one to her, believe me, whatever you may think of it—she shall never come within our doors—never distress my Lucy with her presence. I did not think,” continued the squire, “that I should ever have yielded so much; but I owe it to you, Willy. And now I have one favour to ask in return: never to mention her name again in my presence, nor in Lucy’s; it will only give us needless and unavailing pain. Promise me this.”

Franklin reflected. He had obtained more than he had dared hoped for, and as much, perhaps, as he had a right to ask. He could not, indeed, account for the strange antipathy which had evidently sprung up in the minds of both his old friends at “The Oaks,” against the gentle Ellen, for whom, as a child, they had thought no indulgence too extravagant, no high praises undeserved. But neither could he account for the fearful lapse she had made—or, to say the least—the grave indiscretion of which she had been guilty, which had produced such a change in their minds. Moreover, in promising that Ellen—estranged as she was from his affection—should be cared for and have a home superior to her old home at the Vicarage, Mr. Oakley had shown that her substantial comfort and domestic happiness should be cared for; and this was as much as could be expected, though far less than Franklin could have desired for her. He still further reflected, that when he had accomplished his mission, he should himself disappear, and for ever, from the

scene; carrying back with him to his distant wilderness home, only the consciousness of having paved the way for a more complete and entire reconciliation, which must needs be the work of time; and that then it would be almost out of his power to interfere afresh, or to offend his benefactors, or to hazard the welfare of their son by naming the obnoxious name. After a few moments' hesitation, therefore, Franklin gave the required promise.

"We have now done with this subject, then," said the squire, with a sigh of relief.

"Not entirely. You have given me permission to seek for poor Miles; but I must be furnished with some clue."

"All the help I can give you, you will find in this packet"—he produced a little bundle of papers from his pocket. "Lucy told me I should want it, and she made me bring it," said the squire. "She had a shrewd guess, I suppose, that you would prevail over me. But there isn't much. You will see that the—well, I won't call names—that Miles has not been heard of by us for more than a year—that he has changed his name (he had the grace to do that), but that he declines to tell us what name he goes by, or went by, when he wrote—that—but you'll see it all, and make it out better than I can tell you; so now let me know something about yourself, Willy."

We need not follow the squire and the young bush-farmer in their further conversation, which turned upon colonization and other kindred matters, until their watches warned them to separate for the night. Early on the following day, the squire made preparations for returning to his Lucy and his home, having vainly besought the company of Franklin, who evaded, as he best was able, any premature declaration of his intentions for the future.

Left thus, with the slight and imperfect indices to his intended

research which the documents in his hands contained, Franklin commenced his labours. His most obvious first resource was to insert such an advertisement in several newspapers, as would—if they met Miles's eye—sufficiently explain themselves to him, without conveying much information to others. This he did for many weeks in succession, without apparent success. Meanwhile, by the stimulating inducement of a liberal douceur in hand, and a much larger prospective reward, he engaged the private unofficial services of as experienced a member of the honourable confraternity of Bow Street officers, as the London of that day could furnish, and whom he took into his confidence. Franklin was led to this expedient by reflecting that if Miles still adhered to the profession he had taken up, he would by this time have found his way, occasionally at least, to London, which was considered (so he was told) the head-quarters of all provincial artists of that calling. He did not confine himself to these researches, however, but took frequent journeys to distant provinces and populous cities, always keeping his single object in view ; and it might have seemed, to any one unacquainted with our hero's secret spring of action, that he had suddenly become so smitten with the charms of the theatre as to have lost all other relishes in life.

What strange scenes Franklin witnessed, and through what temptations he passed unscathed (because it was his path of duty, and he was armed with the panoply of conscious rectitude), we have no disposition to describe. It is enough that months passed away, and Miles Oakley remained yet undiscovered.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

## "THAT NELL."

SIX months had glided by, and no traces of Miles Oakley had been discovered. Franklin was discouraged; but, determined not to give up the pursuit while any hope remained, he was continually urging his satellite, the detective, to renewed exertions, by larger promises of reward.

One morning this worthy made his appearance at Franklin's lodgings (not those from which he had been enticed by the squire); his countenance was stolid and unmoved, but there was a twinkle in his eye which betokened a new gleam of hope.

"We shall do now, sir," said he.

"You have said so before, Mr. Gordon," said Franklin; "and what makes you think——?—but sit down."

Gordon drew a chair to the middle of the room, sat on its edge, and taking from his pocket-book a printed paper, very long and very narrow, he spread it on the table before him. The paper was a play-bill.

"That's our man, sir," said the satellite, laying his finger on the name of Richardson, which appeared in the body of the bill; "and that's where he is to be found now," shifting the digit to the heading, "Theatre Royal, ——, Dublin." "That's where our man is, sir; or, leastways, was a week ago, and where, of course, he is to be found now."

"I have taken so many journeys on a false scent, Gordon," said Franklin, doubtfully, "that you won't mind my asking you how you are so sure of being right this time?"

"Not at all, sir; not at all. You see, in conducting this case—leastways, in working it out—I have kept my eye always on Doory Lane quarter, where most of this sort of gentry are to be

heard of at one time or other. And last night—leastways, in the afternoon—looking in at ‘Mother Cox’s,’ according to custom, I took notice of a seedy-looking chap I had had some acquaintance with a time ago, on some little matters of business which are neither here nor there.”

“I understand; and you wormed yourself into his confidence, as usual.”

“Why, in this case, Mr. Franklin, he couldn’t very well help it. Maybe he wished me further off, and maybe he didn’t; but you see he knew me, and he saw that I knew him; and there I had him.”

“I see. But may I ask why you should suppose that this seedy-looking gentleman could give you any information about Miles Oakley?”

“Well, sir, I didn’t suppose it at first. To tell the truth, there’s another little affair which I have an interest in, being more in my regular line; and I don’t mind telling *you*, Mr. Franklin, that ’tis an Old Bailey job. I shouldn’t wonder now, sir, if you have been a bit of a hunting-man in your time,” said Mr. Gordon, abruptly; “if you wouldn’t mind my saying so,” he added, apologetically.

“Not at all; and I don’t mind saying that I *have* been a bit of a hunting-man.”

“Just so, sir; and maybe, when you have been in full chase after one fox, we’ll say, another has crossed the road and drawn off your dogs from the first?”

“Such a thing sometimes happens, Mr. Gordon.”

“Well, sir, say man instead of fox, and you have it,” continued the officer, with a knowing nod. “When I was beating about the bushes for my other man, a few words dropped by chance made me prick up my ears; and here we are, sir.” Once more Mr. Gordon laid his finger on “Richardson.”

In further explanation, Mr. Gordon said that the seedy gentleman upon whom he had lighted was an actor of no very high pretensions, and had only the day before returned from Ireland, in proof of which the play-bill before him was in some sort a voucher. Also that he had left his company on account of a quarrel with the manager, in which quarrel one of his fellow-tragedians was mixed up. And, nothing loth, he began to confide the origin and progress of the quarrel to Gordon, who listened at first without much interest, until a few words appeared to identify the actor Richardson with the man after whom Franklin and himself had been so long in search. A few questions, skilfully put, confirmed this suspicion, and reduced it almost to a certainty. "But," added Gordon, when he had got thus far in his report, "perhaps you would like to see the man yourself, sir?"

Eagerly acquiescing in this proposal, Franklin accompanied his agent to the house known as "Mother Cox's," where the man was to be found; and the result of an hour's interview was Franklin's immediate preparation for a journey to Ireland, by way of Liverpool. Four days later, he was in Dublin:

\* \* \* \*

The information Franklin had picked up (price one guinea, well laid out) from the nameless gentleman in the seedy coat, led him to the conclusion that the actor, whom he believed to be his old companion and friend, had long since discovered that "the way of transgressors is hard," and was now arrived at the barren harvest-time, described in the sacred volume under the expressive figure of sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind.

Emphatically, and far beyond many others, who are yet no laggards in this unprofitable husbandry, Miles Oakley had "sown the wind." What was there—(so Franklin reflected)—what was there within the bounds of reason, and perhaps many

steps beyond the bounds of true wisdom, that his unhappy friend might not have had for asking? But he had recklessly thrown away the treasures of his youth—the hopes of his manhood; had squandered the wealth of home, parental love, friendship, to become—what? The account given of him by the man at “Mother Cox’s” furnished this reply:—

A wretched buffoon: unfit even for the vocation he had chosen, and retained in its lowest grades from motives of charity, while despised by his associates for his incompetency, and disliked by them for his superior breeding. His former affluence, meanwhile, was exchanged for deep and grinding and constant poverty; for, unable to work his way to what the world might have deemed a respectable position in his calling, his only chance of continued employment, and of earning daily bread, was derived from a precarious connection with men and women, who, like himself, were degraded in the world’s estimation; though, unlike himself, they were either unconscious of, or indifferent to, their deep degradation.

One redeeming feature in his poor friend’s case presented itself to Franklin. The stranger of Drury Lane described him as being dotingly fond of, and faithful to the young wife who shared in his poverty. This was something; and while Franklin’s heart ached and his lips quivered and his eyes filled with tears, as he thought of Ellen—poor Ellen—in such a position, he was yet grateful that she had the solace of a husband’s affection. There was hope in this.

But the young wife was ill—this also the stranger had reported; so ill that her part on the stage (Franklin shuddered as the image of Ellen in the tawdry garments and painted cheeks of an actress came into his thoughts) had to be filled up by another. It was said that she was in a decline; and that Richardson (otherwise Miles Oakley) secluded himself from all

society, and passed all the hours in which he was not professionally engaged in her company.

Franklin was hopeful here. He would not permit himself to believe that Ellen was thus passing away. Ill! no doubt she was ill. The sorrows of her mind—bodily privations—anxious cares for to-day and to-morrow—distaste to the publicity of her profession—with all this pressing upon a slight and delicate frame, and a constitution which had never before been tried, how could it be otherwise than that nature had given way? Franklin could almost find it in his heart to be glad that Ellen was so far ill that she could no longer be the puppet of a theatre. And he pleased himself with fancying that even the partial overtures of reconciliation of which he was the bearer (and he would take care that she should not know how partial, as regarding herself, they were) would do more towards her restoration than twenty doctors.

Thus thinking and hoping, Franklin wended his way from the inn in Sackville Street, where he had taken up his temporary quarters, towards the obscure and dirty suburb in which was to be found the particular theatre, dedicated to royalty by a flight of Milesian imagination or humour. It was a miserable afternoon; the rain descended in torrents, and the mud was ankle-deep in the streets. Even the beggars, who are both numerous and pertinacious enough in Dublin, had evidently been cowed and dispersed, for there was not one to be seen; and the guide whom Franklin had hired, with the promise of a double fee, shuffled along silently under the shelter of his ragged jasey, as though ashamed to be seen abroad in such discreditable circumstances.

Pushing on, however, in spite of these discouragements, Franklin was presently landed in a low arched passage, which he was told was the entrance to the theatre; and here his guide

(having secured his reward) suddenly decamped, leaving our young bush-farmer to follow up his adventure alone. A few steps more led Franklin into a kind of office, which served, as it seemed, for the receipt of custom by night, and a lounging place by day for the hangers-on of the establishment. At least, several men who appeared to be fac-similes of the seedy man whom he had seen in Drury Lane were then present, and looked inquisitively at the visitor as he entered. They were politely civil, however, and listened respectfully, though not without a shade of suspicion, as Franklin could see, to his inquiries respecting "a Mr. Richardson, whose name" appeared on the bill he held in his hand.

It did not surprise Franklin that his question was received with hesitation and reserve. His several months' experience in the purlieus of theatres had prepared him for this; but this same experience had furnished him also with a kind of free-masonry in the way of signs and words, which prevailed against suspicion; and on the present occasion he was—after a momentary consultation—informed that the gentleman whose name he had mentioned was under heavy domestic affliction (doubtless, poverty, combined with the illness of poor Ellen, thought Franklin, with a secret pang), but that, if the inquirer wished, a messenger should accompany him to their brother actor's lodgings. Accordingly, a boy was called from the interior of the mystic temple, and proceeded, under the protection of Franklin's umbrella, to dive down a neighbouring lane, thence across a dismal court, then through a tortuous passage, until the goal was reached, and he was dismissed with a liberal fee.

The place was a miserable tenement, upon which Franklin, little fastidious as he had become in his beatings about the world, looked with dismay. "Poor Ellen! my poor dear!" he whispered to himself as he knocked at the broken door.

"He's above, if ye want to see him; but ye're not a praste I think, sir," said the old woman, to whom Franklin preferred his request.

"Not a priest certainly; but a friend. Shall I find my way, do you think?"

"Ye'll not very well miss it, sir," replied the crone, who, crouching over a peat fire and smoking a short pipe, seemed but little inclined to rise and lead the way; "the stairs are before ye, and the door's at the top. Ye'll tread softly, for there's a broken step as ye go up;" and saying this, the old woman once more closed her lips over the stem of her dudeen. The directions were explicit enough, however; and following them, he came to a door, which at his repeated summons was presently opened.

The room into which Franklin was admitted was darkened, and the day was dark, as well as closing in; no wonder, then, that Franklin, in the first moment of surprise, did not recognise Miles Oakley, in the haggard, neglected, pallid, sorrow-stricken, bent and downcast man who silently admitted him. But Miles Oakley it was; and in one moment their hands were clasped (oh, how clammy cold was that of the poor actor!), and the next moment, Miles's head was resting on the stronger shoulder of his foster-brother, and he was sobbing—sobbing. It was agony to witness his grief.

"And Ellen?" whispered Franklin, presently, when the first paroxysm had subsided; and, in a few broken words, Miles had said, "How good! how kind!—oh how kind!"

"And Ellen?"

A wild cry of anguish rose to Miles's lips; but he kept it down. "Poor Ellen—poor Nelly!" he whispered hoarsely, in reply—"will you see——?"

"I should like to see her if I may," said Franklin, quietly:

"don't fear me," he added ; " I have no fear for myself. I can bear to meet her as a friend, a very dear friend, but only a friend and your wife."

Perhaps the young husband scarcely comprehended—perhaps he scarcely heard—his friend's words ; for (as Franklin afterwards remembered) he looked like one bewildered, or as one in a waking dream, and made no reply ; but he grasped Franklin's arm and silently led him to an inner doorway, over which hung a ragged curtain. Drawing this aside, he motioned the visitor to enter, himself following.

It was a small, bare chamber, in which two dull candles were burning, and shedding a pale yellow light, which struggled with the fading daylight very feebly. But Franklin could see all that the room contained.

There was a bed untenanted, a small table, a chair, two tressels, and a coffin.

Franklin was not prepared for this. For a moment he staggered and felt himself turning deadly pale.

" You did not tell me of this," he whispered hoarsely.

There was no reply ; for Miles was standing by the side of the open coffin, bending over it, and his hot tears were falling fast. At length he muttered, " I loved her, Willy, I have never ceased to love her. Poor Nelly ! she was very good to me ; she never reproached me. Come and look at her, Willy : it will not shock you ; she is beautiful even in death."

And Franklin, with trembling steps, drew to the side of the coffin too. The light of the candles fell upon the face of the corpse. Miles had said truly, " She is beautiful even in death." Want, suffering, disease had not destroyed the loveliness of youth ; it had but rendered it more ethereal and unearthly. *But the loveliness was such as had never belonged to Ellen Murray.*

" You remember that May Day," said Miles, unconscious of



the cause of Franklin's speechless surprise—a surprise amounting almost to terror in its first effects, and which rendered him for the time, incapable of thought. “You remember that May Day, when poor Nelly was *Queen of the May*. That was the beginning of my love for her; and I little thought how it would end. My dear, dear love!”

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CLEARING UP.

**A**BOUT a fortnight after the discovery recorded in the last chapter, the two young men, Franklin and Miles, were the sole occupants of a private sitting-room in the Sackville Street hotel. They were both attired in deep mourning, for poor Nelly's funeral had taken place ten days before; and Franklin had prevailed on the widower to leave his dreary lodgings, and sojourn with him at the hotel, while waiting for a reply to a communication he himself had sent to “The Oaks.”

We have just said that Franklin prevailed on the widower; but no lengthened argument or persuasion had been needed, for a melancholy so profound as to border on silent despair had taken hold on Miles Oakley; and, as though he were passing through the scenes and stages of a hideous dream, without power of resistance or awakening, he suffered his foster-brother to do with him whatever he would.

Meanwhile, Franklin had had time to ponder over the strange series of misconceptions under which he had suffered. He recalled to mind that the name of Ellen Murray had been mentioned only once in the entire correspondence which had related, either directly or indirectly, to Miles's unhappy clan-

destine marriage ; and then only as a gossiping report. He remembered, too, that in his interview with the old squire, the same reticence had accidentally been maintained. And yet not altogether accidentally, perhaps ; for Franklin felt that he had shrunk from mentioning the name, and from referring to the parents of Miles's supposed wife ; and he could easily understand now, that the squire had, with equal repugnance, avoided speaking of her more explicitly than by the contemptuously angry epithet of " that Nell ; " supposing, as a matter of course, that Franklin knew to whom the term applied. And thus the error in his mind had been confirmed and perpetuated.

And now Franklin could comprehend what had been inexplicable to him before—the anger of the squire, and Mrs. Oakley's sympathy with that anger, against Miles, for having formed an unsuitable alliance. He could also better understand how his infatuated foster-brother, despairing of obtaining his parents' consent to this alliance, had plunged himself into the misery which is the necessary attendant on duplicity. Undoubtedly there was a considerable difference between Ellen Murray, the amiable and intelligent and well-instructed daughter of a gentleman and a clergyman, and Ellen Lucas, the uneducated and spoiled, though sprightly and naturally intelligent child of one of the squire's own labourers. And though Franklin had nothing but pity to bestow on his unhappy friend, and deep and sorrowful feeling for the poor girl who had so fatally missed the happiness which she no doubt believed to be in store for her, when she consented to become the wife of the heir of Oakley, he could not so bitterly blame his old friends at " The Oaks " for their strong indignation.

Sincerely as he regretted, therefore, the premature death of poor Nelly, and the sad bereavement of his friend, Franklin could but see that this event opened the way for a more

complete reconciliation than he had ventured to hope for. And he waited, if not without impatience, yet without anxious dread, for the reply to his letter, which he now expected.

It seemed cruel and unfeeling to Franklin himself, and he strove against the feeling; yet he could but know that, in the midst of his sympathy for Miles, his heart was lightened of a heavy load. Even if Ellen Murray were as far off from himself as though she had been Miles's wife—as no doubt she was—he had not to think of her any more as miserable and disgraced in that connection. Indeed, when he recalled his past grief on this score, Franklin blamed himself exceedingly for having permitted the monstrous and dishonouring belief, which had caused that grief, to enter his mind. So wise he was, as we all are, or think ourselves to be, after the event.

It was an intense relief, at all events, to Franklin to be able to turn back his remembrances of Ellen into their former channel, and to picture her as still honoured and beloved, instead of cast out and abhorred.

Franklin could but feel glad, too, that the treachery he had ascribed to poor Miles was a phantom of his own imagination. Whatever his faults, his friend and foster-brother had never been unfaithful to him. And never, perhaps, had our hero known so much of the true value of that self-conquest, which, by God's grace, he had achieved, when it was thus brought home to him how nearly he had been angry without cause, and unforgiving without offence.

It may very well be supposed that Franklin had not, in the few days they had been together, broached to the unhappy widower any of the thoughts which we have briefly passed in review. On the contrary, he had endeavoured either to lead his reflections to matters of higher moment, or his hopes to the generous forgiving reception which awaited him at his old

home. To these benevolent efforts Miles had hitherto answered scarcely a word ; now, however, on a renewal of the theme, he suddenly replied, with more animation than he had hitherto shown—

“ You have left out one strong argument, Willy, which would reconcile me to—to ever returning to Oakley.”

“ And what is that, Miles ? ”

“ The hope of seeing you happy. You look at me wonderingly ; but you know what I mean. You will be married to Ellen Murray, and she will make you happy.”

“ If I wait for happiness until then——” Franklin began to say ; but Miles interrupted him.

“ You think that Ellen has forgotten you—that she was as ready to cast you off like an old glove, as you were faint-hearted to——”

“ Not faint-hearted, I think, dear Miles ; say that honour required the sacrifice.”

“ You may call it what you like ; but it won’t alter the fact that Ellen remained true to you, and does remain true, or I’ll never put faith in woman again. Do you know, Willy,” continued Miles, with more animation than he had yet spoken—  
“ can you guess what drove me at last to marrying my own poor darling Nelly ?—not that I would not have had her, if I had waited ever so long ; but why I made a midnight flitting of it, and—and so brought sorrow to her as I did ? You don’t ; but I’ll tell you. You know Mrs. Murray, and how she, poor woman, was always planning and scheming to bring Ellen and me together. Well, after it was all over with you, as she thought, she redoubled her efforts : she made herself perfectly ridiculous, and poor Ellen perfectly miserable. This went on till your letter came, which you asked me to give to Ellen herself. I did give it ; and then we came to an understanding. She

would never disobey her parents by marrying without their consent; and, of course, as you gave her up, she submitted to that too; but she would never marry another while you remained single."

"Did Ellen say that?" exclaimed Franklin.

"Ay, and more than that, though I can't recollect it all now."

"If you had only written a line to tell me this, it would have—at least it might have in some measure altered or modified my own course."

"How could I write, when Ellen Murray forbade me to mention her name to you? Besides, I could not have written without telling you of my own Nelly; and—but that is not what I was speaking of. Traps were laid for Ellen, and traps were laid for me. Mrs. Murray was indefatigable; she won over my father (her own husband had been won over long before), she was near upon winning over my mother, and, in short, she was determined to have me for a son-in-law, seeking for her daughter position alone. Meanwhile, poor Ellen—your Ellen, I mean—was made miserable. I could see it—by her mother's manoeuvres on one hand, and her persecution and reproaches on the other, till I could not bear it any longer; so I cut the knot, and run off with my own Nelly, and left the busy lady to make what moans she liked over her broken basket of crockery; and there's the whole truth of it, Willy."

"My poor Miles! you have paid dearly for your generosity," Franklin could not help saying, deeply affected as he was, even to tears.

"Pooh! never mind me; I am not worth a sigh. Besides, if I had not done that, I might have done worse; and I did it to please myself, after all."

Thus far the conversation had proceeded, when a waiter





WRECKED, BUT NOT LOST.

entered the room, and softly whispered a few words in Franklin's ear, which, whatever their import, caused him first of all to start from his seat with a sudden flush of joyful surprise, and then to follow the man as he withdrew. A few minutes passed away, and then Miles was clasped in his mother's arms, while the old squire stood by, resting his broad hand on Franklin's shoulder.

"'Tis all Lucy's doings, Willy," the old man blurted out, in detached words—"she would come; as soon as she got your letter, nothing could keep her away—bless her! So we started off to Liverpool, and waited for the packet, and——Miles, Miles, my dear boy, my dear, dear boy——" for by this time he had secured Miles's hand in his grasp; "may God forgive me, if I have seemed hard-hearted and cruel! but I didn't know."

Enough. Let the curtain fall reverently on the scene.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### A FINAL TÊTE-À-TÊTE AT THE VICARAGE.

ONCE more our curtain rises, and another scene opens.

It is early summer: the old oaks at Oakley are rejoicing in their rejuvenated foliage, and the first nightingale's song has been heard arising from the thick shrubberies of Oakley Vicarage. It is evening—between lights, as Mrs. Murray says; and the vicar and his wife are the sole tenants, for the time being, of their little drawing-room. The gentleman has been dining at "The Oaks," and is just returned to his nest.

"It is all settled, I suppose, Mr. Murray," says the lady, a little querulously.

"All but having your final consent, my dear: we could not



get on without that; but I have ventured to say, my love, that you will not refuse any longer to make our poor Ellen happy."

"It is very pretty to put it in that way, Alfred, when you know that you are all set upon doing it, whether I like it or not. What does it matter what such an insignificant thing as I——"

"Now, my dear Isabel, you do yourself and every one else a great deal of injustice," says the gentleman, soothingly. "It matters so much, that Ellen will never be William Franklin's wife if your objections remain."

"Ellen has chosen for herself, Mr. Murray, though she knows it has been against my judgment."

"Against your wishes, my love; but you see, and, by the way, Isabel, darling, don't you remember? Dear me, it is so long since that I have lost my reckoning; but you can call to mind what your own mother (a dear good creature she was, though she did not like me at first)—but don't you remember her saying almost those very words, 'Isabel has chosen for herself;' and then, she added, 'as people make their beds so they must——' "

The good vicar cannot complete his sentence, for his wife, ashamed now of her ambitious folly, seizes his hand.

"We have been very happy, Alfred," says the softened lady; "and Ellen shall be happy too, if I can make her so. Poor child! she has had a long time of trial;" and Mrs. Murray's eyes glisten with sympathy.

"I knew you would say so, my dear," replies the admiring husband; "for you always take the sensible view of a case—— in the end. And now I shall have pleasure in telling you, that though Franklin is so determined not to receive anything from the squire, except his father's old farm, 'The Lees,' he won't

enter upon that property without sufficient means. The money—that old lady who was lately buried——”

“Old Mrs. Franklin?”

“Yes, of course; well, the amount she has left behind her is astonishing. How she must have hoarded and scraped to get it together, to be sure! More than £1000 has been found about the house, in the most unimaginable places, and Mr. Peake says he has not half done searching yet. So, when letters of administration are taken out—which Peake promises shall be done with all despatch—why, my love, Ellen’s husband will be a good deal richer than yours was when you married him, or than he has ever been since.”

The lady reflects a little while; then she says, “And there’s the property over in New South Wales; but I suppose that will go to wreck and ruin, now that Franklin has made up his mind not to go there again.”

“I am not so sure of that, Isabel; and I have something to tell you that will surprise you—about Miles.”

“Poor Miles!” sighs Mrs. Murray; and if it was a last sigh for the final downfall of that castle in the air which the good lady had so long and painfully been building, let it pass.

“Yes, my dear; Miles has proposed to go out to Sydney for two or three years, and to take charge of Franklin’s interests there. He has pressed this so much, and with so much reason, that his father and mother have consented. And, to tell you the truth, I am glad of it: it is very wise of them.”

Once more the lady says, “Poor Miles!” and the gentleman responds, “Yes, my dear Isabel;” and then he adds, “It is the best thing, in all respects, that Miles can do. We have seen, my love, how the weight of his great sorrow, and, I may add, his remorse, presses upon his spirits, in spite of all the kindness and overflowing love with which he has been received back

again. Well, nothing will so effectually (so far as human means are concerned) tend to the shaking off of this unprofitable sorrow, as an entire change and active occupation. And then, as Miles is sincerely desirous of abandoning his old disreputable connections, and is justly afraid for his own powers of resistance, he will have an opportunity of entering on a new course, unimpeded by the temptations which would be sure to assail him at home."

"I don't know that, Alfred," says Isabel; "but, since the thing is done, there's no use in arguing; there's another thing, however. I hope Mr. Franklin does not mean that our Ellen is to go and live in that very mean and dilapidated old farmhouse at 'The Lees;' because, if he does, I will never con——"

"My love, that is provided for, and I think to your satisfaction—I mean to our mutual satisfaction. Franklin intends to devote to its restoration that part of his inheritance which was derived from the sale of the farm; and our old friend the squire insists upon adding an equal amount, so that our Ellen may have a good house over her head, as he says. But he gives this on condition, my dear, that you will see to the alterations yourself, without any interference, because you showed such excellent taste in the improvements of the vicarage——"

"If I were you, I would not repeat such nonsense, Alfred," says the lady, who seems pleased, notwithstanding this gentle disclaimer. "But there is another thing——"

"Another thing, my love!"

"That old woman, Martha White. I am sure it was only in the strictest confidence that I hinted to her the possibility of Miles and Ellen——"

"Yes, my dear, I know," says the gentleman, hastily; "and she betrayed your confidence; it was very naughty of her, and

proves that the best of us poor creatures are not always wise and perfect."

"See what mischief came of it, Alfred; and what I want to know is, whether she is going to hold a responsible position at 'The Lees?' Because——"

"My dear, Martha White will not live at 'The Lees' at all; she is to retain possession of her late old mistress's little farm."

"That satisfies me so far," says the lady; "but there is another thing——"

Happily for the vicar, there is at this moment a loud, boisterous knocking at his gate.

"It is the squire and Mrs. Oakley," says Mr. Murray, starting up with alacrity; "they promised they would bring Ellen home."

"My dear Alfred," says Mrs. Murray reproachfully, and also starting up, to give a hurried glance at herself in the mirror, "how could you be so thoughtless as not to tell me this before?"

"My love, I fully meant to do so," says the gentleman, apologetically: "but the truth is, I had forgotten all about it."

And then the squire enters, and his Lucy enters, leading Ellen by the hand; and presently the squire draws the vicar into the study, or the vicar entices the squire there, whichever the reader pleases; and then——

"And when is it to be, Lucy?" asks the squire triumphantly, as he walks homeward with his wife leaning on his arm; "for of course it is to be; but when?"

"Any day but May Day," replies the lady, softly; for she is thinking of that other May Day.

## CHAPTER XX.

## AFTER MANY DAYS.

MRS. LUCY OAKLEY'S married life had been, as we have shown, not without its trials, yet also not without its alleviations. She had done her small part, in faith and love, to lessen the ignorance of the poor around her home, and to exercise her influence on the various members of her family, with whom she was more closely brought into daily intercourse. There were difficulties in her way, no doubt; but she was a discreet little woman, she was patient also, so she cast her bread upon the waters, waiting in hope that she should find it after many days.

Not that she had any intimation that her work of faith had been entirely unblest. We have before said that this Christian woman did not look for miracles; and certainly, if miracles had been wrought, she would thankfully have acknowledged that it must have been by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, and not by any weak instrumentality of her own. Thus, though Martha White and Letty Franklin would gratefully have pointed to the good lady of "The Oaks," as having first of all directed their attention to the Rest-giver for the heavy-laden, they well enough knew that her human voice and generous sympathy were but the conduits through which trickled, and then flowed in a fuller stream, the Water of Life from before the throne of God.

And so with Willy Franklin. With him the seed had sprung up very gradually; first, the blade, in the nursery to which he had been so mercifully removed; then, after many days, the ear; and we have imperfectly told our story if our readers are not prepared to believe that the leadings of

Providence on his behalf, his varied experiences, and his restoration to his old home (as he could but consider the hospitable mansion which sheltered him from childhood through boyhood and youth) were but after many other days, preparatory to the full corn in the ear.

We might go on to show that, even in so unfavourable a soil as the Oakley of our earlier chapters might have seemed to be, changes were gradually taking place, morally, certainly, if not spiritually, traceable in a great measure to the influence of "the lady of 'The Oaks,'" the old squire's excellent wife.

We write now of days a little farther on than the date of our last chapter, and the departure of young Miles Oakley, on the voyage and subsequent occupation which would, as was hoped, turn his thoughts into another channel than that of consuming grief for the loss of his dear Nelly.

Meanwhile, Miles's foster-brother, Willy Franklin, was quietly and happily settled down on his newly-built and commodious farm-house, with the family farm of the Lees, unmortgaged, and restored to him, as his own freehold, by the generosity of the old Squire Oakley, who, in his fast declining years, was given to looking back on certain passages of his middle age with something like heart-searchings. Willy Franklin was also married, as may be opined, and rejoiced with much gladness over the prize which, at one time, he had given up as so far beyond his reach of attainment.

Of course the wedding took place at the old church of Oakley; and we are happy to record that the vicar's lady, following the suit of her better-satisfied husband, had gradually to confess that, as things had turned out, her Ellen might have made a much more objectionable alliance.

It is therefore to be understood that three years and a little more have passed away, and that Miles Oakley the younger is

soon to be welcomed home as the undoubted heir to the great estate he had, by his imprudence and folly, so nearly forfeited. He had formed no new connections, matrimonially, in the far distant land. He had been a faithful steward to Willy Franklin. Increased prosperity was now gladdening the hearts of the free population of the colony, and Willy had shared in that prosperity. At that time he received a long epistle from his foster-brother, who thus wrote :—

“ MY DEAR MILES,

“Your last letter has cheered us all. It is a great mercy to be led, by whatever devious ways, to a knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal; and we can thank God that your intimate acquaintance with my old friends, the Wilsons, has conduced to so blessed a result. You can only barely imagine how your dear mother rejoiced with a full heart as she read and re-read your testimony to the power of the Gospel in your written experience, and seemed almost ready to repeat the words of old Simeon, ‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,’ and to declare how often she had been cheered by the Divine encouragement, ‘Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.’

“And, Miles, there is no one who rejoices over you with a more Christianly joy than your dear father, our good old squire. ‘To think, Willy,’ he said to me the other day, ‘that the Lord should have been pleased, in His infinite mercy, to show His great salvation to, and soften the hard heart of, a fourscore-year old sinner, such as I have been, and also to reveal the Saviour’s grace to my own son at almost the same time! But it must have been in answer to *her* prayers who has laboured night and day in secret for us both, in spite of all discouragements. Tell

Miles to come back as soon as he can, that my Lucy may see what God has wrought.'

"I don't care to mix up business with this letter, only to say that the offer made to you for my farm seems very satisfactory, and the sooner you close with it the earlier we shall hope to see you.

"I am, dear Miles,

"Your faithful loving,

"W. FRANKLIN."

The father and son were permitted again to meet.

Two years later, a plain funeral procession wended its way from "The Oaks" to Oakley Church.

Two years still later, another followed.

Both coffins were deposited in the family vault; and a tablet on the wall withinside the church recorded the names of "Miles Oakley, Armiger; and Lucy, his beloved wife."

Two years yet still later it was currently reported that the young squire, after long deliberation, had resolved once more to enter into the matrimonial state; but the present chronicler, being removed from the neighbourhood of Oakley, is unable to confirm the rumour. He is enabled to add, however, that an animated friendship was, up to that date, maintained by Miles Oakley and William Franklin, his foster-brother.

THE END.





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